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# AUNT DICE:

## The Story of a Faithful Slave.

NINA HILL ROBINSON.



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NASHVILLE, TENN.:  
PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.  
BARBEE & SMITH, AGENTS.

1897

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To My Beloved.



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## PREFACE.

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IN this little work the author has preferred to follow the simple truth, feeling all interweaving of fiction to be out of keeping with the character of whom she has written. Beyond the use of a story-teller's license, sparingly indulged in, this story is strictly true.

As the details of everyday life would prove monotonous to the reader, the writer has given but little more than the outlines of the life of this beloved servant; and though a short work—only a recreative hour for the busy American—a simple story simply told, it is written as a tribute to the memory of one who was faithful in all her ways, with the hope that her name may be honored and remembered.

It is known that the speech of the Tennessee negro differs slightly from his extreme southern kinsman. Aunt Dice was free from many of the stumblings or more uncouth forms of the negro dialect. The word "master" she used with an "o" sound, as in "moster." Her way was her own; she borrowed no form.

In conclusion, need it be said that it is yet the hope and desire of the Family to remove the sacred dust of this honored servant to her chosen place of burial, where Cæsar sleeps and the Candlesticks bloom?




# AUNT DICE:

## The Story of a Faithful Slave.

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### CHAPTER I.

 HERE are large possibilities to men of advantages. Material help is a needful stepping-stone to greater things. A cultured faith in a higher life aids much toward the upbuilding of true worth and character.

But to the unlearned, whose rude surroundings hold no uplifting element, to whom all books are forever sealed—their lettering unmeaning hieroglyphics—what is the inspiration to be faithful, to live uprightly? What is the stimulus to noble living and well-doing in the kitchens of the ignorant?

Of such a one I write; nay, more than this: born a slave, she called nothing on earth her own. Untutored, save in the monotonous drudgery of work, she found only one help in her way—the simple story of the cross, sung in many a southern kitchen; the cross that uplifts wherever its blessed shadow falls.

Of her simple, rugged life no poem need be woven, though other lives of lesser merit have found a way into prose or rhyme; but from oft-

repeated tales, the picked-up relics of her deeds and sayings, the story of her life may at least prove her memory wholesome.

Neither can be told of her any great achievement or heroic action, for she had read no Psalm of Life, no Book of Golden Deeds; but only one of humble plodding in the way of duty—the only duty she saw plainly before her, that of faithfulness.

The neighboring slave owners of South Afton were curious when it was learned that William Macy had purchased the negress Dice. Men of standing these were, in a well-to-do neighborhood; of plethoric purses, of broad acres, and crowded negro quarters; men who understood as well the requisites of negro barter, the buying and selling prices, as they were familiar with the good points of their best horses. So the surprise was great when a generous sum was paid for the negress by the owner of Riverside, known to be a wise and cautious dealer, who for once overlooked the fact of her thirty-four years, her delicate frame, her deficiency in bone, muscle, and flesh.

It was talked of at the river mills, the cotton gin, and the stillhouse among the hills, where men grouped on Saturday afternoons to discuss the latest Whig news, the prices of negroes and cotton, or the relative value of their own prime whiskies or peach brandies.

But the question was settled at last by a quiet answer: "I bought her to raise my children." Perhaps the wise owner looked farther than bone

or muscle in the purchase of one to whom he could trust his children. Hired to him for two years previous, he had found her trustworthiness alone sufficient to uphold him in the sum paid for her.

It was in the winter of eighteen hundred and thirty-four (for she came in with the century) that Aunt Dice, with her two children, was removed from a thinly-settled district twenty miles distant, and installed as chief cook and general superintendent at Riverside plantation. Beyond her kinship to Uncle Amos, the most trusty and best beloved of the slaves at Riverside, little was known of her or hers, save that her mother was an excellent servant—a pioneer negress of Middle Tennessee, brought from Virginia to the old Nashville Fort, in the perilous days of Indian warfare. Her one other recommendation was that she was reared “in the house,” an important element in the purchase or sale of a negress: a raw “field hand” occupied no enviable position beside the superior house girl; though in her case this did not greatly add to her value, as, orphaned in early infancy, she was brought up amid surroundings so rude and uncouth that the wonder was that her thirty-four years had found her true and worthy.

Concerning her own private griefs or wrongs Aunt Dice, as she was called, was strangely reticent. If a burden were hers to shoulder, she preferred to bear it proudly alone. It was only after years of intimacy that her new mistress, who delicately forbore to question her, learned that her

former master kept an inn or hostelry noted for its drunken revelry and riotous living, where travelers passed the night on their way to the "far west"; where negroes were bought and sold, or gambled away; a home upon which civilization had hardly turned its light, or religion its morals.

"My mistis was a good 'oman," Aunt Dice had said. Perhaps the influence of this one "good 'oman" had much to do toward the shaping of her character; if so, then indeed the hard, bare existence of this "mistis" was not passed in vain.

There were few places on the river so pleasantly situated as Riverside plantation. Commanding a high and wide outlook, the farmhouse, with its painted whiteness, its airy rooms, and cool, wide galleries, looked inviting enough through the surrounding maple grove and silver poplars. A green lawn, ornamented with old-fashioned hedges of lilacs and pink crepe myrtles, sloped from the steep bluff overlooking the river to the great double gate leading to the graveled drive by the water's edge. Beyond the house, and farther up the river's side, were the negro quarters—a long row of log cabins with double chimneys, and gardens attached. There was the "loom house," where the spinning and weaving were done. The cotton house stood near the great, wide barns, and the "shop," with its charcoal forge. Across the "big branch," and still farther up the heights, was the family cemetery, solemn with its waving cedars and white marble stones.

There were broad bottom fields skirting the river's edge; rolling uplands sweeping out to the distant hills, where the swine were fattened yearly; thence onward to the Barrens, where the cattle grazed. Lucky the farmer who owned an outlet to the Barrens—a wild, almost unsettled country, rich only in native grass and cool springs.

A fair domain it was, set like a jewel within Tennessean hills, fairer for its romantic scenery, its native wilds; dearer for its crowning grace of southern life and cheer, which, alas! is but a memory. The palmy days of Riverside have departed with the changing times; but the river that swept around the old homestead, whose blue waters silvered in the sunshine and deepened in the shade, laughing over rocky shoals and silent by the high, still cliffs—the river of “ye olden” days—is still the same beautiful, lovely South Afton.

## CHAPTER II.

**I**T must be said that the whole plantation prospered under the steady rule of Aunt Dice. No sooner was she domiciled by her broad cabin hearth than she began to enlarge her borders. Her two years' experience as a hired underling held her in good stead: she understood her master's needs, the merits and demerits of his slaves. Her second coming was an era of greater importance. The negroes, from venerable Uncle Amos to the smallest pickaninny, realized that she held a certain amount of power—how much, she herself did not stop to question; she only knew that she was grateful to a kind master, and she proved her gratitude with the remainder of her long life. For her, too, the change was wholesome; whether from her comfortable surroundings, or the kindly treatment of a new and much-loved master, it is hard to say, but certain it was that the frail, sickly negress gained new strength as the years passed on, until the neighboring slave owners reluctantly acknowledged her “the likeliest nigger on the whole creek.” Certainly she was the hardest worker: she often said there was not a lazy bone in all her body. Not only did she help to tend and rear the children, but she was the ruling spirit of all the “hum and hustle” of each busy day. Her first



duty was to sound the long, wild call of the hunting horn from the back gallery, and dole out to the slaves their morning "drams" from the rum barrels in the cellar before the day's work began.

It was here that she commenced her discipline. The long row of rollicking laborers filing up the path from the quarters hastened to a quickstep under her searching glance. Not that she disapproved of merriment. "Light hearts make light work" was a proverb at Riverside. But she received no laggards at her early drink offerings. Uncle Jack knew to a nicety how long to hold his inverted position, his usual obeisance to his morning dram. Aunt Dice heard complacently the rhythmic "pitapat" of merry feet, the back-steps knocked out on the graveled walk, or the jokes which were "swapped" in bantering tones and high good humor—a form of greeting that varied little from morning to morning.

"Hi, dar, nigger; stir yo' stumpers!"

"I takes no slack jaw dis mo'nin'. I walks right ober you 'reckly."

"Huh! ef yo' sasses *me*, I slams yo' down, chile, and puts my foot on yo' haid. What's de kon'squence ob dat?"

"A daid nigger! Dar'll be de kon'squence," is the cheerful response, while a succession of calls, "hoorahs," and cries of "Hear dat nigger now!" "Ain't he a steppin'?" sounded clear and vibrant on the still air.

On they came. Uncle Amos quietly in the lead,

baring his head to Aunt Dice's courteous "Good-mo'nin'," Uncle Silas following with his usual plea for a "leetle drap mo' for de mis'ry in de back," and the sharp response, "Step on, Silas; I want yo' room."

"Come, boys, be lively; daylight's burnin'." And the dusky column moved on with boisterous shouts and musical calls, startling the sleepy cocks from the barnyard roosts, and echoing across the river, which lay aflush under the eastern skies.

Aunt Dice, though supervisor, scorned an idle hour. It was she who prepared the well-cooked meals for the master's table; who ordered provisions for the quarters; overlooked the butter-making, the spinning and weaving, the cutting of garments, and the plain sewing for the numerous slaves; never resting her weary feet until the last laborer went back to the fields after the midday meal. Her master sometimes gently interfered: "Two hours' rest at noon, Dice. Man and beast should rest in the heat of the day."

So when the songs of the laborers rang out from the fields, and the music of wheel and loom went merrily on within, Aunt Dice went out to her cabin to take her well-earned rest and enjoy a quiet smoke, her only indulgence. Her clean, fragrant pipe, used in unobtrusive hours, was never offensive.

The master smiled over his purchase. He had made no mistake. Conscious of his trust, she soon assumed control of the slaves—in a way. Respectful they certainly were; man, woman, and child

were under her imperious sway, and well she ruled. Aunt Dice believed in discipline; while one and all liked and admired her, she thought it best to instill into this liking a little of fear, to make it wholesome. A lazy negro was her special detestation. She delighted in scattering a crowd of dusky forms, basking, lizard-like, in the sun. Few of the laziest could stand the curious sidelong glance of her sharp eyes, and many a step quickened under that searching look.

How far her rule extended even the master did not question, nor the mistress, who began to lean upon her and trust to her guidance in the manifold duties of a southern matron. The rule of the house—its domestic duties—it was hers to order. Her judgment was supreme, her counsel never lost. The mistress, who as “Lady Bountiful” dispensed a wide charity, had only to say to her, “Aunt Dice, our neighbor is sick; she needs help.” Aunt Dice packed a full basket and started on her errand of mercy, ministering to the poor in a way well fitted to heal a mind diseased. She fed and nursed, she cleaned and swept, until the bare, rude homes of the poor whites shone bright with the sick faces.

The master found himself referring to her wisdom: “Dicy, shall we kill hogs this week?”

“They’s eatin’ they heads off, Mos William, an’ fat as mud.”

The hogs were slaughtered.

“Is it time to plant potatoes, Dicy?”

“’Pears to me the groun’s waitin’ fur ’em,”

was the busy answer; and the potatoes were planted.

But Aunt Dice was also learning. Within her wholesome surroundings she found much to edify, to help her. The nobility and upright character of her quiet master; the influence of the mistress, a woman of kind speech and gentle manner; the pure atmosphere and well-ordered household; a house whose God was the Lord, the Bible the most honored book in the quaint old bookcase; not a home of pretentious superiority, but one of comfort and solid standing, of quiet, far-reaching charity and Christian excellence—all these elements were unfolding within the stunted soul of the slave an inherent germ of rare worth and beauty. Her observant eyes lost nothing that could serve to strengthen or uplift her. Her hungry soul was feeding.

At night, within her cabin, sounds of mirth and revelry reached her from the quarters, the patter of time-keeping feet, the music of fiddle, banjo, and ringing clevis pins. But the sound which pleased her most, which reached her soul, came from the cabin of Uncle Amos, which was set apart from the quarters in the shadow of the woods; a song whose volume of sweetness and power poured its melody into every chink and crevice of the crowded quarters, hushing the ruder noise of viol and uproarious mirth:

"The mo' I pray the happier I am;  
I love God, glory, halleluiah!"

On the still night air the melody trembled, soared,  
and reached from glory to glory:

“This religion I believe,  
Glory, halleluiah!  
Soon we'll land our souls up yonder,  
Glory, halleluiah!”

From Pisgah's top the venerable old patriarch  
sang:

“Happy people ober yonder;  
Happy people ober yonder;  
Soon we'll meet dem ober yonder,  
On de oder bright sho'.”

Aunt Dice listened, and prayed. This seed, sown in good ground, rapidly grew and bore fruit. It was shortly afterwards, as she lay on a sick bed in the early days of her invalidism, that Aunt Dice found the wondrous peace and realized the power of redeeming love. The prayer of Uncle Amos, strong in its faith, the piled-up promises before a throne of grace, the sure answer of peace, proved to the purchased slave the “glorious liberty” of the soul. Aunt Dice was “converted”; to put it plainly, she was born again. The old-time religion of Tennessee, which blazed its way with the pioneer ax, that held its own through civil strife—the conflict of brother with brother—that holds good to-day, was ever afterwards her stay and support. She received her baptism from a white minister, held her membership with a white congregation, and drank the wine in communion—an honored and trusted member.

The years passed on, and Riverside prospered.

The negro quarters broadened and throve under the humane treatment of a kind, much-loved master. To say that Aunt Dice was a valued servant and trusted friend but faintly expressed her worth. The children were objects of her especial care. To tell of her stanch integrity, the faithful performance of a duty imposed upon her, it is well to say that the pure morals she set forth, the homely advice she gave from her great, untutored soul, live yet with the children's children.

Her cabin was a rendezvous for the little ones, which, as best remembered, was a log room neatly papered, with a wide fireplace, and a loft overhead. In front, below the bluff, ran the river, ever the friend and companion of Aunt Dice's solitary hours. From the back door a sunny garden stretched, where it was her habit to sit and smoke her pipe in summer afternoons, where she watched the broad sweep of the cotton fields, and the silver sheen of the river through the tall sycamores that fringed its winding course. The cabin was comfortably furnished. The old-fashioned "four-poster" was nearly hidden beneath a huge feather bed and drapery of the snowy counterpane. A bureau with glass handles stood under a swinging mirror. A cupboard, suggestive of tempting edibles, occupied one corner, while a swinging shelf full of quilts hung from the ceiling.

Aunt Dice, sitting in her split-bottomed chair by the broad hearth, was a conspicuous and familiar figure. She was of low stature, and, after her re-

stored health, just fleshy enough to hide the waistband of her everyday apron. In her cotton gown she looked comfortable enough, but in her "Sunday" costume she was more impressive—really grand-looking—wearing her black silk gown and mantle, or black lace shawl, to advantage. Her face is more difficult to describe—a strong, homely face, which, whether severe or pleasing, seemed to have "character" written in every curve and expression. Her forehead was expansive, her eyes—not the prominent African's—were rather small, and full of fire, whether twinkling in fun or in those curious sidelong glances which reminded one to be up and doing. Her nose was slightly flattened; her broad, roomy cheeks were smooth and glossy; but her mouth—well, those great lips could drop an inch or more in a seemingly senseless stupor, or twist almost to each ear in a caricature of which the children were often unfortunate victims; yet Aunt Dice was wont to draw them up with such a majestic sweep, such grand curves, that her face was truly inspiring.

Beyond her faithfulness and upright qualities, her next distinctive characteristic was pride, not in herself alone, but in her surroundings—the fair possession of her beloved owners, and the children, with whom she spared no pains to uphold the family standing. The "grown-up children" she considered beyond her reach or discipline; she gave them the respect due their years, kept a shining, spotless table, laundered their linen, critically

inspected their toilets—and their visitors. But the three youngest—two girls in long pinafores, and a toddling boy—she called her very own; an appropriation they were not slow to learn, since it involved a tutelage peculiarly Aunt Dice's.

Annie Macy, gentle and quiet, was too much her mother's counterpart to often need reproof; but long and many were the times that the merry, careless Katherine sat on the low stool by the cabin hearth—to her, in truth, the stool of repentance. Both were careful to observe their manners and bearing more closely in this humble cabin than in wider territory and greater freedom; for well they knew that this was Aunt Dice's vantage ground for a lecture. A lecture—without words—they most dreaded. If one sprawled in her chair in unfeminine negligence, Aunt Dice would festoon herself on every available one in the room; if one were unfortunate enough to let fall a silly remark or show an unwonted stupidity in Aunt Dice's presence, she would literally double herself on the low stool, showing a dull, expressionless face, her great lips dropping, quivering, until from sheer pity she would laugh suddenly, lay her black hand on the delinquent head, and say with tender emphasis: "Don't think Aunt Dice is an ole fool, chile." Now when she laughed, remember, she laughed all over; her whole body caught the enthusiasm of those short metallic sounds—quickly over; but oh, how she enjoyed it! What a light in those small,



dark eyes! What a glow over the dark face, which was neither a yellow nor a gingerbread color, but a truly black. Her tears were something like her laugh—a quick, convulsive sobbing, short sounds of grief; then her face was its own, its cheerfulness predominant.

The boy, whom she unceremoniously dubbed Sam—or Sammy, as occasion required—was not so easily managed; though, strange to say, she loved him most—a love he returned with all his might. From his crawling age he loved the space of her broad bosom, the shelter of her arms; and many a journey did he take astride her neck to the cotton fields, whither she went on her quiet tours of inspection. As a toddler he was ever at her heels, though in her cabin he soon learned the usage of the stool, and was often put sobbing in the white bed after a wholesome spanking, when the storm in his blue eyes had burst in unusual violence. His awakening, however, found a solace and recompense sufficient even for him: the cupboard doors were as wide open as the arms of his dark monitress.

“Whar *do* the chile git his temper?” was her frequent query. “Not from Mos William, *nur* Miss Mary.”

Many a lesson in manners and morals did she teach the children. Her natural instincts of true courtesy and refinement were uniformly correct. She especially detested a giggle, and never forgave a woman she knew for a rather boisterous

sneeze in church. Indeed, her sharp eyes were ever quick to detect a breach of etiquette or a charm of personal manner.

Still, her cabin had other attractions. Aunt Dice was wise. She was careful to gloss over the irksome effect of her "preaching." Though she never tolerated a ghost story, being free from the superstition of her race, she kept in store a number of Indian tales for the appetite of the little folk, and stories of wolves which howled about her cabin in the early days of the century.

When the girls were old enough for school, Aunt Dice made them sing their "b-a ba's" to her while she listened gravely, and thought them prodigies of learning. When their samplers, worked in gay crewels, were brought to her, she inspected them critically: "Yours'll do, Miss Anne; that's putty well done. You mus' have one now in silk, an' hang in mistis' room."

Over Katherine's sampler her long lip quivered and dropped.

"You don't like it, Aunt Dice!" cried the offender, almost in tears.

"It's sorter so, Katherine—only sorter. Them letters may do well 'nough; but I ain't neber seen *yit* red leaves an' blue roses."

Aunt Dice ruled. The truth was plain. She had probed her way into the very hearthstone of her mistress's household; but she never repelled or nauseated one by a close intimacy. Cleanly in speech and person, her nature was strong and

sweet, her influence stimulating. Under her care children were safe.

The master found for her a wider field of usefulness. The cabin connecting with hers by the double chimney was set apart for her use, and it was usually filled with motherless slaves, children whom the kind master had picked up from less fortunate homes; outcasts, vagrants, with little reputation to lose and much to gain. The master stood often at her door with a new purchase: "Dicy, take this boy to your cabin. Teach him to bathe and be clean. Teach him how to live."

Stimulated by her master's confidence, Aunt Dice began to wield a powerful influence; not only among her orphaned charges, but throughout the quarters she taught in homely language the reward of virtue, the excellency of honest, upright living.

### CHAPTER III.

**A**UNT DICE had her own romance, however; or her sorrow, as it seems more fitting to term a negro's tale of love. Few guess the tragedy that lies buried beneath the stoical exterior of negro life: bravely bearing their domestic troubles, even cheerfully taking them up as their allotted portion.

The master was somewhat surprised when Aunt Dice came to him one Christmas eve, and asked his consent to her marriage with Cæsar, a handsome, stately negro from a neighboring plantation.

"I am sorry to hear this, Dicy," he said slowly; and perhaps this was the most lengthened advice he had ever given her. "I hardly like the negro. He is too great a beau among the women; too fond of gadding about. However, I shall do the best I can for you."

Cæsar was ambitious. The beau of the colored community, the gallant of every social gathering, he had looked about for years for a suitable helpmeet—a "quality nigger," whose position would insure him a promotion to a higher standing. His inordinate vanity suggested Aunt Dice to him—a power at Riverside, and already an aristocrat to her finger-tips—as a means to this end. As her husband he would acquire a preëminence among

his own which would place him on a higher scale as a—gentleman. Riverside, too, was a fair field for his ambition in a business way; that is, his possible purchase and position as overseer.

It was evident in a quiet way that Aunt Dice “favored” Cæsar. She approved of his spotless linen, his polite address, his elegant manners. She was attracted. His delicate attentions pleased her. She graciously consented when he asked, with the bow of a Chesterfield: “Lady, will you hab de goodness to ’low me to ’scort you to chu’ch?”

Aunt Dice, sitting at the rear of the “white meetinghouse,” could not help but notice that Cæsar led all his colored brethren in grace and deportment, a steady dignity that with all his faults never failed to command Aunt Dice’s respect.

The master made good his promise by buying Cæsar; perhaps he did not tell Aunt Dice the stern talk he received from his new master, when he was promised the hand of the favorite slave.

So they were married. A great feast was spread, one that the darkies long remembered. Uncle Jack stood on his head until his strained sinews reminded him of a more convenient performance. Uncle Silas forgot his aches, and “limbered up” for the occasion. The scraping of fiddles, the tuning of banjos, the jingle of clevis pins, told of a breakdown for the late festivities.

In the mistress’s own parlor they stood before the white minister while he read the beautiful formula of the marriage ceremony. Cæsar was

resplendent in a suit of broadcloth, ruffled linen, and white satin waistcoat. From the top of his carefully carded hair to the tip of his polished boot he was immaculate. Aunt Dice, clothed in pure white, and not uncomely, was quiet and thankful for the many kindnesses conferred upon her by the white people, and for the blessing laid upon her head under the trembling hands of Uncle Amos.

Cæsar proved a kind husband in many respects; indeed, he always observed toward his wife a courteous bearing and outward show of greatest deference and respect. He executed the honors of his cabin with all the elaborate manners of an old-school gentleman, and the careful hospitality of a southern host. He himself was treated with some distinction as the husband of the princess regent: his meals were served on a white cloth in the master's kitchen, his morning drams from the family sideboard. Gifted with quick intelligence and business-like tact, he was trusted with yearly sales of produce, and never failed his master in accurate accounts and profitable transactions. Promoted to overseer, he indulged his love of pomp and display, and made a stately figure in the cotton fields astride his master's handsome black horse, or riding with conscious superiority beside the great wagons as they rolled into Nashville, laden with the generous harvestings.

This last purchase proved a remunerative one. Cæsar was a valuable slave. But the master's misgivings proved too true. Cæsar was fickle.

His shallow nature found no rest beside the deep, still fount of his wife's love and faithfulness. Married life for him had hardly begun before he donned his tall silk hat and renewed his gadding about—a veritable flirt to the day of his death.

Aunt Dice bore her wrongs in silence. None ever heard her complain. There was only a closer application to duty; a noticeable tenderness and devotion to children; an unconscious leaning toward the gentle mistress, who answered the mute appeal with unstinted sympathy.

Cæsar was still an object of grave consideration with Aunt Dice. His wants were attended to with studied care; his silk hat and black clothes always in readiness; his snowy, ruffled shirts the wonder and admiration of his many dusky friends. But her affections settled more surely, perhaps, around her own children, a son and daughter; particularly her son, Charley, who was growing up to manhood, and who, as the unfolding years proved, brought upon her the keenest trial of her life.

Charley was a bright-skinned youth, with jetty curls, and eyes that sparkled with such changeable lights that no one could tell what lay beneath the glittering surface. “The devil is in ’em,” said his playmates.

That Charley was “rapid and onsteady” Aunt Dice realized with sorrow. Moreover, his companionship with Sam, the youngest born of her beloved master, caused her constant uneasiness. How far these boys ventured into mischief or dan-

ger, Aunt Dice could not determine. They tamed wild colts and broke the oxen; they hunted, fished, swam, played, and scuffled. Aunt Dice detested this scuffling, which often ended seriously. Charley was ever sullen and hard to control, but Sam, her nursling, had lately begun to measure lances with her and declare his rights as the young master of Riverside. These bold declarations, however, had only ended ignominiously for Sam. She found them one day—Sam and Charley—in a hand-to-hand encounter, rolling and scuffling on her cabin floor.

“What’s the cause o’ this?” she demanded in a quiet, stern way, which sent Charley cowed to his corner. Sam stood up straight and faced her with his stormy, blue eyes.

“He told me a lie. If he lies, he’ll steal. I told him so.”

“Don’t be so sho’ o’ that, Sammy. Come here and set down.”

Again they measured lances. Sam met her keen look boldly.

“Don’t call me ‘Sammy.’ Call me ‘Mos Sam’—Aunt Dice—I—”

Aunt Dice led him by the ear with no gentle hand to the stool in the opposite corner.

“Set yo’self down thar, twell you fin’ yo’ manners. I’ll call you ‘Mos Sam’ whenever you ’sarves it, chile—whenever you ’sarves it. O, Sam,” her voice dropping suddenly, “why ain’t you like Mos William?”

“I can’t *be* like father!” cried Sam wrathfully



from the stool which he was careful not to leave. "I never *can* be like him."

"It 'pears to me, Sammy," Aunt Dice continued, "that you've rode ever' calf on the place, an' lamed up the colts, an' you're jist a killin' off all ole mistis' geese. I throwed a gander in the river t'other day, an' a goose to-day. Who is it, you or Charley?"

Mos Sam caught the wicked sparkle in Charley's eyes, and was silent. Aunt Dice looked the guilty culprits over.

"You've allus tried to shiel' Charley, chile, but lis'en to me: keep way f'om him; he ain't no fit comp'ny fur you."


Mos Sam wriggled on his stool. Charley dug his toes in the ashes on the hearth and eyed his mother sullenly.

Aunt Dice picked up her knitting. Out of doors the sun shone brightly; the birds called and whistled; the river rippled on its way and silvery trout leaped up from its blue waters, gleaming in the sunlight. Farther up the bluff a crowd of negro boys plunged headlong into the cool depths of the "big hole," their laughing whoops and "dar ye's" sounding tantalizingly clear to the two captives within.

Mos Sam turned his eyes from the shining stretch of river and sought the calm glance of Aunt Dice over her busy needles: "Mammy, I'm hungry."

Aunt Dice opened wide her cupboard doors: "Here, chile, go 'long now. Stop yo' fightin' an' be a man," she said—to the flying heels which disappeared around the corner of her cabin.

## CHAPTER IV.

ORNSHUCKING! Not the New England "husking bee," famed in song and story, when stalwart youths and rosy maidens were wont to meet and dance on rude barn floors after the busy husking; when the fortunate finder of a red ear of corn tendered his prize to his lady love, the one with whom he "kept company." Oh no! but the noisy, merry cornshucking of the *ante-bellum* South, when negroes held high carnival amid swinging ears of corn and around the laden table of the harvest feast; when master and mistress bowed cheerfully to the grotesque rule of the merrymakers for a season—the swift-winged hours of the cornshucking night.

The negro's highest ideal of enjoyment has its necessary accompaniment of a feast. Second only to the Christmas festivities at Riverside, with the array of baked sweetmeats, the crammed stockings of "goodies," the bowls of creamy eggnog, the happy "Chris'mas gif's," was the yearly cornshucking, with its merry misrule and harvest cheer. Next in turn came the hog-killing in frosty November, where visions of sparerib pies and backbone stews were realized and enjoyed. The sugar-making in February broke the torpor of winter; and lastly, the wheat harvest in June

brought the busy reapers, whose sickles swung amid the yellow grain to the beat and measure of their harvest song, while the "Bob Whites" called through the livelong day. Within a shady inclosure, kept cooler still by swathings of wet green leaves, was the keg of whisky, no less a feature of the summer harvest than the savory dishes served at the quarters, where the dinner horn rang a suggestive sound that the "big pot was put in the little one."

"Cornshucking, boys!" shouted to the laborers at supper in the quarters' kitchen at Riverside brought forth a slapping and beating, a whoop and call, a general stampede of broganed feet under the kitchen table.

"Dram, dram; oh, dat bottle!" rolled from a pair of lusty lungs.

"Stop dat noise; wait twell yo' time come."

"Barbecue, barbecue; ham an' turkey! P'ossum an' taters; chicken stew! Hustle, boys, hustle!"

Preparations began. On the next day invitations went flying across the country, up and down the river, to the colored acquaintances of neighboring plantations. On this particular occasion, Cæsar, who omitted no chance to celebrate his high position, found this a convenient time to illustrate his authority and display his wisdom as a general manager. Pigs, lambs, and a tender calf were slaughtered, and lay roasting slowly over hot coals in the trenches. The hills were scoured for game, the river dragged for fish; chickens, tur-

keys, and ducks were sacrificed, while at the quarters negro women stirred their bowls of sweetened dough, "whipped" their frosting, or tended the ovens of rich, sweet corn lightbread.

Aunt Dice suspended her rule and smiled over the merry quips and quirks of the waiting women, the antics and pranks of the pickaninnies. She spread the long tables with clean white linen, and piled them to fullness with jellies, custards, and dainty furnishings of her own handiwork—not forgetting, however, to lay by a generous store for the schoolboy Sam, who was taking his first lessons in life under the uncertain favor of a pedagogue's rule. His dinner bucket, Aunt Dice considered, was naturally his greatest consolation since he had arrived at the age of pies, tarts, and flaky pastry. She was wiser than she knew. The schoolboy's heart beat some of its truest throbs for her when he opened his well-packed dinner pail after a trying lesson in syntax.

But the cornshucking!

At nightfall the steady incoming of the invited guests crowded from over the hills and up the valleys, by twos and threes on horseback and muleback; by the dozen in heavy, lumbering wagons; by the half dozen in swift-gliding canoes. The work began. The heaps of corn, piled high in the cribs, dwindled surely under the strong hands of the shuckers. Cæsar, ever mindful of an opportune moment to display his superior excellence, stepped grandly in his best clothes from crib to crib, or-

dèring his troop of busy boys in gathering the huskings, or stowing the corn into barrels. Old men passed the compliments of the day or related their experiences, replete with wisdom. Young men "swapped" their jokes, or bantered for shucking races in braggadocio-like tones. A low, monotonous chanting slowly gathered strength as the dark, smart faces swayed back and forth under the gleaming lamplight:

"Th'ow it up, shuck it up—  
Corn pile, corn pile!  
Shuck it up, round it up—  
Corn pile!"

Louder grew the singing; musical intonations, a call, a beat, a whistle, touched the chorus into life:

"Th'ow it up, shuck it up—  
Corn, corn, corn pile, corn!  
Shuck it up, round it up—  
Corn, corn pile, corn!"

The golden ears swung high, swung low. Dusky forms swayed to and fro, while high above the din floated the melody of the cornshucking songs, rising, falling, swelling in perfect measure.

Pickaninnies reveled in the shuck piles. Pickaninnies scampered from barn to quarters' kitchen, and stared with wide-eyed wonder at the fancifully decked tables and huge trays of smoking meats. Sounds of life and bustle at the quarters reached the workers in the cribs, while odors of juicy meats drifted to them from the dying coals in the trenches.

Faster flew the busy hands. The yellow corn swung low, swung high. The sleepy birds twittered from the trees. The startled king of the barnyard dunghill rang his clarion call at ten o'clock. A hundred voices flooded the air with music, widening, swelling, pouring into the homes of neighbors, far and near, rocking the babies to sleep; floods of music, in resonant bass and glorious soprano; a note, a call, a whistle filling in the measure harmoniously. The hearty cheer of the opening lines blended well with the repeating chorus:

“Work away, boys;  
Heave-ho!  
Sing away, boys;  
Heave-ho!”

Words of their own improvising did not disturb the steady rhythm:

“Gimme dat co'n year;  
Heave-ho!  
Th'ow me dat co'n here;  
Heave-ho!

“Fetch up dar, nigger;  
Heave-ho!  
Limber up, nigger;  
Heave-ho!”

Uncle Amos, though hardly in his element, worked steadily from his corner in the great barn. Duty, not inclination, called him there. He took no part in the singing: those songs were not religious ones, therefore he failed to respond to the riotous music. A song of redeeming love would

have fired his old eyes and made nimble his fingers, which all these merry jingles had failed to do. Nevertheless, he endured patiently, sure of a halleluiah chorus in his honor before the carnival ended. Uncle Amos knew that throughout the quarters his venerable white head was universally respected. One and all did him reverence, but never more so than when in his walk among them, as if treading the border land of another world, they sang sometimes in smothered tones,

“Ole man, ole man, yo’ head’s gettin’ nappy,”

followed by a burst of applause from lusty throats:

“Yes, my Lord! an’ my soul’s gettin’ happy.”

Charley was, as usual, the imp of the occasion; an imp of the evil one himself, so thought many who had more than once borne his overbearing insolence and sly trickery. He coupled his merry buffoonery with a cunning which served him well in shirking his duty. The harvest feast was his to enjoy, not his to serve. He walked the joists of the barn, swung head downward, and many a well-aimed ear of corn struck the woolly head of a busy worker.

That Charley presumed upon his honored relationship the men of the quarters felt deeply. There were none so bold as to inform Aunt Dice that with all her discipline, her moralizing and instruction, she had reared one so badly. Their well-meant sympathy and deep respect for her

kept them silent. Perhaps Aunt Dice realized her failure more than they knew, though as usual her mantle of proud reserve shielded her from curious questions and unpleasant advice.

But little cared Charley for their liking or dislike as he swung high among the rafters, whooping, calling, or blowing his flute-like canes. He jeered at the older and bantered the younger men, and wound up his antics by stepping coolly in front of the master himself, who looked on occasionally, and executing a jig of fantastic figures with wonderful rapidity.

"Bless dat boy!" said Uncle Jack cheerfully.

"He needs a tech o' Moses' rod," snarled Silas, whose ear smarted from a recent blow.

"He sho' is a hard boy," declared Steven, whose wisdom was seldom questioned.

"Dat he is!" responded a chorus of emphatic voices.

"But you is got dat up wrong, Uncle Silas, suh," continued Steve, who considered no meeting complete without an argument. "I ain't neber hear nothin' 'tall 'bout Moses' rod; but Sol'mun do p'intedly say in fust Ginisis, when he was libin' at—"

"Normandy," interpolated Jack.

"At Jerushalem, dat ef you spar de rod you sho' spile de boy. Ain't dat so, Uncle Amos?"

"Do your own arguin'," said Uncle Amos.

"Where is Normandy, Jack?" queried Sam, an amused listener from the window.



“Now listen at young moster!” exclaimed Jack busily. “I don’t ’zackly ’member, suh, whar dat kentry is; I suttently see it in my trabels, some’r’s ’long ’bout Novy Scotia, Ontario, or de Lowlands,” he concluded, with all a negro’s fondness for musical names.

“Now to ’clude my disc’urse,” persisted Steven, who could read laboriously: “f’om de ’casion o’ Uncle Amoses last demark, it natchelly comes to min’ dat to argefy we mus’ hab a toler’ble knowledge of de Bible; dat is, to ’lustrate, ef we steal an’ lie—I say *ef*—how cum us to know de wrong, les’n de Bible speshelly say so. So de kon’squence is, an’ de natchel impersition mus’ be, dat to be saved inter de kingdom come, de Bible mus’ p’int de way. How’s dat, Uncle Amos?”

“I don’ know nothin’ ’bout de Bible, ’cep’n what de white folks say,” said Uncle Amos.

“Den, suh, de question is, how cum you know you’s bawn ag’in?”

“I wunst wus blind, but now I see,” said the old slave simply.

“Das so, das so,” said wise Steven.

The shuffling of feet in the cribs, the triumphant cheering, told of the last “rounding up.” The tall clock in the master’s dining room pealed the hour of twelve.

“Dram, dram; oh, dat bottle!” sang the workers.

Charley, from his high resting place, made a monkey spring for Silas’s aching back, and bounded out the door to be first at the feast.

Uncle Amos quietly left his corner as the last heap of corn was rapidly disappearing. He found his way to the quarters where the waiting tables stood, and Cæsar waited also to do the honors of Riverside.

"Aunt Dice, tell Mos William to hide—dey's nearly done."

On such occasions the master little relished the demonstrative affection of his slaves—a ceremonial ride three times around his dwelling on the hands of a stalwart pair of leaders. He chose to "hide" after ordering a keg of his best brandy to the feast.

"Dram, dram; oh, dat bottle!" On they came in a column of two abreast, marching to the stone steps of the back gallery; but the master's significant absence and a word from Aunt Dice turned the column with noisy cheering back to the quarters.

And such a feast! Barbecues, brown and juicy, from a rabbit to a fat porker. Fish, broiled, baked, and fried; opossum and sweet potatoes; ducks, geese, and turkeys, roasted and stuffed; enormous chicken potpies; gallons of steaming coffee; mounds of frosted cakes; piles of puddings, jellies, and elaborately trimmed pies!

The master and his household stood smiling in the background. Uncle Amos lifted his hands and praised the "good God fur de blessin' of de harvus' feas', fur de kin' ole moster an' mistis, an' de glory of His name."

The feast began. Negro wit flowed freely.


Negro women dressed in smart clothes served from the heaped-up side tables, under the quiet orders of Aunt Dice.

Two hours afterwards the scraping fiddles and beating feet signaled the grand *finale*. The "hal-leluiah" chorus, which was not forgotten, aroused Uncle Amos from his morning nap.

The galloping horses churning the river, the swish of canoes, the soft stroke of paddles, the shouts and calls, proclaimed the hour of dawn and the departure of the guests.

With the sunrise Aunt Dice stood at her post by the rum barrel and kindly greeted the advancing row of laborers. Cæsar sat his horse like a king. The cornshucking was over.

## CHAPTER V.

HE eldest son of the house was married. The master settled him on a plantation several miles up the river, and Charley was given to him as part of his 'marriage portion, which was a relief to Aunt Dice, as he disturbed the quarters with a quarrelsome, dictatorial disposition.

Uncle Amos, too, though old in years, followed the nursling of his heart with the same devotion as when, in his younger days, he had followed his old master, then a tender stripling, from far-off Virginia.

Two years were spent in busy life. Aunt Dice spared no pains to uphold the open hospitality of prosperous Riverside. She spread a tasteful and bounteous table. The old-fashioned sideboard glittered with crystal goblets, bowls of white loaf sugar, and quaint decanters of wine and brandy, for the refreshing of guests and numerous callers—a time-honored custom, now happily abolished.

The elder daughters, two, were married and "settled in homes of their own," Aunt Dice said proudly. The children, Anne and Katherine, were well provided for. New lands were added to Riverside, new farms bought, and Mos Sam was known now as the young master.

Mos Sam had earned his title at last—quite deservingly, Aunt Dice thought, though she still brought him to his senses occasionally, when his hot, imperious temper flashed from the storm of his eyes. Charley no longer urged him on. The fat steers chewed their cuds in peace; the colts frisked and played in the pastures; the geese recovered their dignity and breasted the blue waves of the river with their wonted calmness.

Mos Sam was wrestling with mightier questions. He pored over dry books of chemistry, he conned his Latin verbs, he battled with his geometry, under the threatening rod of the Yankee school-master.

“Dat Yankee school-teacher! Whar he come f’om?” asked Aunt Dice suddenly, after he was duly installed at Riverside as a permanent boarder.

“From Vermont,” answered Sam, shortly.

“Whar’s dat?”

“Away up north.”

“Furriner?”

“Oh no, Aunt Dice; he’s an American.”

“He talk cur’ous,” she said, musingly, “an’ he make too free wid de niggers. Got any niggers?” she asked quickly.

“Yankees don’t believe in niggers; or rather, they don’t believe in—slavery,” stumbled Sam, with a southerner’s reluctance for the word.

“They hold for equality.”

“Huh! fine ekals niggers be—fur gen’l’mun an’ ladies. Who waits on ’em?”

“The Yankees? They wait on themselves commonly, or hire white hands.”

“Humph! I mistrus’ him,” she said, emphatically. “I’ll sho’ speak to Mos William ’bout him. He furgits his learnin’ when he tries to beat it into you—*an’* his raisin’.”

“I’ll whip him, Aunt Dice, some day.”

Aunt Dice laid her pipe on the shelf.

“Mos Sam, outside o’ his whuppin’ you, can’t ye all see how he’s a follerin’ ’long o’ Miss Kath’rine—totin’ of her books to school, sailin’ ’bout in the skyft together, an’ a fillin’ of her han’s wid flowers an’ sich like? Who can tell what’s in dat chile’s head; an’ what *would* she do widout niggers to wait on her?”

But Mos William smiled over Aunt Dice’s warning, and refused to part with the Yankee schoolmaster. Good schools were rare in youthful Tennessee.

Aunt Dice was comforted somewhat. Mos William was wise; he seldom made mistakes. Mos Sam was certainly on the mend—but no niggers! What sort of folks could that Yankee have? She would keep an eye upon him.

The old house echoed to the sounds of merriment and pleasant life. The quarters flourished. Swarms of negro boys fished and swam in the river; swarms of pickaninnies rolled on the grass. Uncle Jack, with his wiry subalterns, led out from the stables his master’s thoroughbreds, whose sleek coats shone like burnished copper, and start-

ed for the Franklin and Triune races, singing the rather stirring couplet:

“De fust time she cum roun’ she open de way;  
De nex’ time she cum roun’ she bid ’um ‘Good-day.

The golden harvests filled the barns. Cæsar rode pompously back and forth inspecting the daily work of busy slaves. Aunt Dice stepped to the music of wheel and loom, or quickened to the far-off melody of the workers’ songs: she was happy. Then came a rude awakening. Rumors floated down the river: “Charley was quarrelsome.” Aunt Dice was filled with dread. “Charley kept strife in the quarters.” A season of suspense, and the news came, swift as the dancing waves of the river: Charley was to be *sold*. Again the waves came prattling by: “Sold to a slave dealer, to be carried south!” Then it was that Aunt Dice knelt at her master’s feet; her proud reserve fled in the hour of her agony: “Mos William! Mos William! save him!”

Charley was brought in, bound, to bid his mother good-by. The master stood by and offered his worth, twice, three times his value. But the slave dealer was obdurate. He had bought him conditionally: he was *not to sell him in Tennessee*. Tears and entreaties were of no avail; mother and son were separated. The burden of her heart so proudly guarded, the dread and suspense of a nameless fate for her wayward son were at last revealed and realized. How she took up the broken threads of life, wove into them her uni-

form cheerfulness and steady devotion to duty, none can judge. Yet it is well to say that through all this stormy period she never lost her cheerful demeanor toward her white people; more noticeably toward the children, where her inexhaustible store of a rare, quaint humor never failed.

She passed a quiet winter. The fattened swine were killed, and the great smokehouse hung full of brown, cured meat. The cotton was picked, spun, and woven. Barrels of homemade soap were stored away in March; then—but perhaps the river could tell it best—how the floods came in the springtime and lifted a hoarse cry; how her brown waters crept over field and swamp and piled her bosom with driftwood; how she laughed again when the summer returned with its hot sunshine; how the bright blue waters danced and rippled with a cruel mirth, or gurgled softly around the gray cliffs of the cemetery, whispering of the east-lying swamps and the deadly typhoid fever.

For silence reigned at Riverside. No longer the wagon wheels creaked under heavy burdens; no longer the negroes' songs rang out from the field in wild melody. The charcoal forge had paled to ashes; the music of wheel and loom had ceased, for the silence of death was within. In the quarters dusky forms lay tossing in pain and wild delirium; stiffened bodies were carried from cabin doors to people the heights of Riverside cemetery.

Still the river laughed and sang. The east



winds blew with the breath of a thousand flowers. Deadly white fogs crept up from the valleys and hung the rugged cliffs in ghostly drapery. It was a bright morning in August, when the birds sang a-lee with life, that within the darkened home of Riverside one of the master's sons lay dead.

Aunt Dice stood the battle bravely. With her master by her side, she trod the rounds of her mission, tiring neither by day nor night. Not that the blow fell less severely on her: her only daughter was among the first to die, and left to her care three orphan children; neither did her strength fail when Cæsar fainted from the bleeding process then administered, and was put to bed to fight the fever at this fearful disadvantage.

Uncle Jack lay down with the rest—happy-hearted Uncle Jack, who never spared a kindly deed nor hoarded a kindly smile. He lay with a mute appeal in his fevered eyes until Aunt Dice closed them forever.

“Will this never end, Dicy?” the master sometimes said, as his tears fell on the stricken faces. He had borne his own sorrow quietly, but the sufferings of these helpless blacks appealed to his nature in strongest sympathy.

Still the fever raged on, and Cæsar went out one night on the wings of its wrath. Cæsar was dead. Cæsar, the gallant beau, the gay Lothario, but ever the polite and courteous Cæsar, was dead. This was a blow to Aunt Dice. He was her sorrow, but yet her pride. She would miss him sore-

ly—his delicate attentions, his unfailing courtesy, his efficient help among the negroes; she would miss his shrewd management. His stately figure in the cotton fields she would see no more. His failings she remembered, but they rested lightly upon her, now that he was dead. He was laid away carefully in his black clothes and snowy linen, and looked in his narrow bed as if he needed but the tall silk hat to take up his gay life again.

The end came at last. The fever was spent. There were long days of rest at Riverside, days of calm while the summer waned, and the convalescent negroes dozed in their cabin doors, or fished lazily with hook and line under the shady sycamores. With the frost came reaction. The axes rang steadily and clear in the hills, and from the whitened fields the harvest songs told in quavering music of renewed hope and energy. There was little to tell of the fearful fever save the fresh-heaped mounds of earth and the tall marble shafts that gleamed amid the cedars at Riverside cemetery.

## CHAPTER VII.

**A**UNT DICE went her quiet way. It seemed as if she had taken up her mission understandingly—bearing her own troubles quietly, and assuming the burdens of others. The cabin adjoining hers was filled with orphan charges; but the three children of her daughter Fanny she kept in her own room with a faithful nurse whom the master had provided. The youngest of the three, a tiny infant taken from her dead mother's bosom, required her constant oversight.

"How is our little pet, Dicy?" was the master's daily question.

The "little pet" throve wonderfully. "Pet" she was called, and a pet she was, fortunately for her, to the end of her short life. At her crawling age she developed a fondness for the "white folks' house," and a veritable black crow she was by nature or practice—always into mischief, or into forbidden grounds, wherever her insatiable curiosity led her fat little body. The mistress indulged and petted her, and kept her often out of harm's way in the cozy sitting-room corner, or claimed her attendance when she, the mistress, went her weekly rounds among the sick and poor.

Aunt Dice returned in full measure the kindness heaped upon her during her late affliction.

The children of her mistress—always “the children” with Aunt Dice, though they were growing to manhood and womanhood—were objects of her unsparing devotion. Her rebukes were a little more stern, perhaps; but even in this she was never tiresome, always ending a lecture with a quaint piece of drollery and inimitable grotesqueness that one must have known to understand. Aunt Dice was never loquacious. Her sentences were short, terse, and to the point. Indeed, if an expressive gesture could avail, words were not used. A shrug of her shoulders was a sign of disapproval; her dropped lip a ridicule and sufficient lecture in itself; her sidelong look a question that laid bare the heart; but one of her broad, sunshiny smiles was a sufficient recompense for all the golden deeds ever done at Riverside.

Katherine, the eldest of “the children,” was thoroughly initiated into these ways; and Katherine now was uppermost in Aunt Dice’s mind, for with the blooming womanhood and brilliant beauty of this “merry maiden” the question of a possible marriage forced itself upon Aunt Dice’s mind. She looked with some dismay upon the prospects of her nursling. Who was her choice? Could it still be the Yankee schoolmaster, who was soon to return to his northern home? Aunt Dice only hoped he would depart in peace, and leave the child where negroes were plentiful. Or was it her Cousin Harry—handsome, good-natured Mos Harry, who had strings of negroes to be sure,

but was much too fond of his wine cup and much too generous to "save money"?

Aunt Dice put the question plainly when Katherine next visited her cabin: "Who *is* you goin' to marry, chile?"

"Guess, Aunt Dice," said the spoiled "chile," spreading out her dainty skirts and resting her slippered feet on the old dog iron.

"That Yankee school-teacher?" ventured the interrogator, painfully.

Katherine pulled a soft, dark curl over her sparkling eyes and smiled wickedly.

"Not yo' Cousin Harry? He's shiftless, chile, if he is a Macy."

A ringing laugh caused the questioner to stumble sadly in her guessing.

"Sho'ly not that ill-mannered upstart what brags on his money? I'd ruther 'twould be that Yankee—"

The dark curls rested in Aunt Dice's lap. A little ear showed rosy red. "Aunt Dice, you dear, blind old mammy, where are your sharp eyes?"

"The preacher!" said mammy suddenly, dropping her pipe in her surprise. "Who would a thought it? Well, well, chile, you'll never be rich, that's sho', but you'll be kin'ly keered fur all the same. You shall have some niggers to wait on ye. Thar's Harriet an' Chany, Dick an' Joel—all Amos's grandchildren. An' you've got a nice home all waitin' fur ye."

Aunt Dice had thought little of the "preacher" as a possible suitor, though he was often at Riverside, as at other plantations, preaching at the quarters, visiting the sick, faithful in duty and earnest in action. He pleased Aunt Dice. Earnest endeavor always pleased her.

The wedding came off quietly, and very beautiful Katherine looked in her white gown and flowing veil; a new dignity on her bright young face, a graver smile on her red lips, which answered to the name of "wife."

With the following winter came a surprise which was a joy and pain to Aunt Dice. It was at the time of sugar-making in the hills, and the campers-out made merry over great kettles of boiling maple sirup, their songs and laughter floating out on the frosty air. Aunt Dice went out to the hills on her daily round of inspection; but what was her surprise to see her son Charley, the gayest of the gay, the central figure of the group by the camp fires!

Charley had "run off"; had found his way, no one knew how, through the trackless miles of forest and swamp, to "home and old moster." But the master could avail nothing, though he again tried to buy him when the slave dealer appeared. Charley was not discouraged. He bestowed a parting message, full of hope: "Sho' now, mammy, 'tain't no use to grieve a'ter me. I'se gwine to keep on runnin' off twell moster do buy me."

He was as good as his word. When the harvest feast was spread, and the shuckers swung their corn to the measure of musical rhyme, Charley surprised them by a spring to the great barn floor, and a rapid "pitapat," executed with wonderful agility for his worn shoes and weary legs.

"Dat 'strep'rous boy'll get his 'sarts some day," commented Steven.

"A rascally scound'el," said Silas, who had survived the fever, and lived to anathematize his kind.

Charley was hardly a welcome visitor at the quarters, even under this romantic guise, though his ability as a "runaway nigger," and his varied experiences, true or imaginary, surprised and interested them. His stay was short. After the Christmas festivities, the reappearance of the slave dealer caused him to turn his face toward southern Mississippi.

Again the dreary length of miles was traversed, and again Charley arrived at Riverside, footsore and weary; after which the exasperated owner sold him—*not* to the master, but to a neighboring planter across the river.

Soon afterwards Aunt Dice gave evidence of a weakness that sorely puzzled her kind old master. "This is Dicy's only slip," he was wont to say. The "slip" was a second marriage, to an old half-witted negro, called Joe Cris, an overseer on the plantation to which Charley belonged. The marriage was sudden, and seemingly without rea-

son. Even Charley could not understand this foolish step. The master's consent had not been asked; indeed, she had been married some weeks before the news reached him.

Joe Cris was a standing theme for a joke at Riverside quarters. He was a small, dark African—a Guinea negro, some called him—with an unusual infliction of impediments: a halting speech; an ambling, rolling gait; eyes that struggled painfully to focus an object; and a brain which served him well with its one merit—that of remaining true to its one idea, which merit alone raised him to overseer. He did as he was ordered, just that and no more. He lacked the ingenuity to go farther, the cunning to do less; so he served well in his place as second overseer.

None ever dreamed that Aunt Dice could look twice at simple Joe Cris. His Saturday night visits had been barely tolerated by her, though always accompanied by some humble offering—a string of pepper, a hen and chickens, a jug of molasses—which she accepted with a stately reserve that made his humble attention more cringing.

With "Mrs. Cris" the joke came to a sudden end. Who was bold enough to laugh at Aunt Dice? So in the quarters there was a painful silence. Aunt Dice went about quietly, very quietly, almost like one dreaming, while the pickaninnies revelled in sunshine and idle hours, disregarding her low call to duty.

Perhaps it was a "slip." The master, after his



first sore surprise, kindly let the matter rest, understanding well Aunt Dice's proud reserve, and forbearing to question the motive, wise or unwise, of her sudden marriage. His confidence in her was not shaken. His sympathy, though unasked, was tendered in various ways. Aunt Dice was still the honored and trusty servant. Indeed, the bond between her kind master and herself seemed more closely drawn as her tender devotion upheld his approaching infirmities. His dependence upon her was great, greater than she knew. She watched him as he sat on the back gallery, the sunlight on his silvered head, an open Bible across his knees. "That Bible is jes' blistered with his tears," she said. She followed him with anxious interest as he went his quiet way among his slaves; his tenderness and care of them she never spoke of without emotion. He carried them upon his heart; their welfare was his constant study. He felt deeply the responsibility of these ignorant souls upon his own. He went to Aunt Dice one day with a message from Uncle Amos, who was done with earthly things. "Go to him, Dicy; see that he has a clean pillow to die on."

Aunt Dice departed on her mission. On a snow-white bed, the dying saint prayed his last prayer and sang his last halleluiah on earth. She returned home with an aching heart. Mos William was failing; he would soon follow. She watched him, waited upon him; she tended and served him, her stern composure almost upset at times by his kindly

smile. A long talk they had together, after which Aunt Dice was never quite the same: there was a greater devotion; a steadier watchfulness, if possible; a tenderer interest in her master's children, as if she had thrown aside her own troubles as worthless things, and had consecrated herself wholly to her master's own.

Still, with the undiminished confidence and esteem of her dear master, Aunt Dice, though deeply grateful, could not bring herself once to explain to him the cause of her sudden marriage. Regarding her own private burdens she was, as usual, mute and noncommittal.

A year afterwards, to her unspeakable sorrow, her master sickened and died, after having at last succeeded in buying Charley and restoring him to his mother. This last act overcame her reserve—too late, indeed, for the master's ears, but around the finished grave, when the white mourners had departed, and the negroes, hitherto orderly and quiet, lifted a wail for the dead master, there was heard a sharp note of agony, and Aunt Dice knelt in passionate grief.

“O my master! my blessed master! I married him to be kind to Charley; an' ye never knowed it! ye never knowed it!”

The negroes stood with bared heads and listened. In that wild regret the mystery of the second marriage was explained. To shield the wayward Charley—the insolent, overbearing Charley—she had sacrificed herself.

## CHAPTER VII.

**I**N the quiet days that followed, Aunt Dice recovered her usual flow of spirits and wonted activity. The plantation thrived under her wise rule and industrious example. The negroes respected, obeyed her. Charley was married, and happier than formerly in the home of his youth.

Joe Cris no longer troubled Aunt Dice, but considerably kept away, visiting her only once a year, bringing his humble offering as an apology for his presence. These visits were received with studied kindness, but great formality. Perhaps the simple old soul felt dimly that he had greatly wronged Aunt Dice; perhaps the enormity of her sacrifice dawned upon him in a clearer afterthought, for he held to the day of his death that "Miss Dicy" was as far above him as the stars.

To the mistress Aunt Dice was a trusted friend, a friend of long-trying worth and human excellence. The young heir of Riverside, who had returned from college, returned also—to rule? Oh no! to the safe covert of Aunt Dice's ample wings and to her almost idolatrous affection. Mos Sam was ever afterwards the song of her heart and burden of her prayers.

But her next care was now her young mistress, Anne, who was gentler than ever in her black

gown, growing more and more like her honored mother, consequently more and more dear to Aunt Dice. The question of her approaching marriage was a responsible one, now that the master's wise counsel was no more. Aunt Dice smoked many a pipe over the problem; she pondered deeply, silently, as the fragrant puffs floated up the broad-throated chimney.

Would he pass—that slender, boyish-looking doctor, who was so kind to Mos William in his last illness—who had already won her mistress's gentle respect; would he pass? She learned that he had settled near a small village four miles distant, and had begun the practice of medicine; but who was he—Mos John Trevor? Mos Sam, who looked a stranger through, had received him kindly, generously; a sure sign of approval.

The "young doctor" himself had given Aunt Dice no cause for disquietude; indeed, from the beginning of his friendly footing at Riverside he had shown a fondness for her—an honest admiration, which she had unconsciously returned. How could she have felt otherwise when he had shown from the first a respect and delicate consideration for her, which she had never failed to appreciate? To her surprise he followed at her heels, talking, laughing, questioning, enthusiastic over the winding river, the high cliffs, the blue hills. He praised her cooking, her feathered brood of fowls, her neat dairy. He even found his way to her cabin, and developed a fondness for her cupboard,

second only to Mos Sam himself. Aunt Dice soon found herself appropriated. She cleaned his gun, mended his fishing-net, and instructed him as to the "likeliest" holes in the river for fishing. He reminded her of a boy turned loose from school to a long holiday. And so it was: the fresh, green beauty of Riverside was a rest indeed from the long lecture room at the Nashville Medical College, which he had quitted, however, with no small honor, it was said.

But this "boy," hardly turning twenty-one, was to wed sweet Anne Macy, one of the children of Aunt Dice's heart. The stern experience of her own sad life admonished her. Would the boy make the man in this case? When trials came—as they surely visited all—would he pass, would he hold true? She resorted to the usual formula—a trying ordeal of questions.

"Whar his folks live, Miss Anne?"

"In Nashville, Aunt Dice," answered Anne painfully.

"Humph! city folks! Ain't they bought a place roun' here some'r's?"

"The plantation, Beechwood, near West Afton."

"I know where 'tis—a likely place, though West Afton might be called 'Mud River,' fur its color. Is they got many niggers at Beechwood?" she asked carelessly.

"I suppose so, Aunt Dice."

"I likes the boy, Miss Anne," Aunt Dice concluded, noticing Anne's flushed face; "but he's

too young—too young. Seems ef he can't git 'nough fishin' an' huntin' 'long o' Mos Sam. He ain't took life in earnest yit, but he'll have to learn by'mby—then will he stan' by ye faithful?"

"Brother Sam speaks well of him, Aunt Dice," said patient Anne; "he says he is a man of fine morals and upright character—"

"Oh, he's been well raised, that I knows; he's well-behavin' an' p'lite, an' none too heavy-handed at the sideboard, I notice. I never 'spect to see anuther Mos William, but he may do well 'nough. I wish ye well, chile; I wish ye well. You'll have my own gran'chilluns to wait on ye; they're young, but I'll look a'ter ye."

John Trevor and sweet Anne Macy were married. Riverside looked beautiful that soft October night. The rooms shone brightly. From dining room to guest chamber, all was complete under the finishing touch of Aunt Dice's faithful fingers. The mistress, clad in a black satin gown which hung in straight lustrous folds about her, her soft muslin kerchief folded neatly over her bosom, her dark hair parted smoothly over madonna-like brows, looked every inch her real self—a sweet, old-fashioned southern woman.

John Trevor arrived from Nashville with his mother and sisters—women Aunt Dice knew at a glance to be gracious and womanly. She stood on the lawn in her best black silk as the carriage, with its stately-stepping horses, drew up through the double gate.

“I’m glad the chile was well fixed fur clo’es,” Aunt Dice said afterwards, by way of a cheerful remark to the lonely mistress. “Thar was her white dress in co’sse fur the weddin’; then her lavender-sprigged mull will do well ’nough over lavender silk fur secon’ mo’nin’; then thar’s her bomb’zine, an’ black silk, an’ bonnits to match, an’ all them putty chintzes made the new blouse waist. Mos John’s folks is nice people. I partic’lar favored one o’ them gals.”

“Which one, Aunt Dice?” asked the young master, flashing a keen look upon her.

“The one that wus tall an’ fair, with the sweet, proud look—Miss Helen, they calls her.”

Mos Sam whistled softly, looking far out at the silver-flashing river, through the sunlit sycamores. Perhaps he “favored” her too—the tall, fair girl, with the “sweet, proud look.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

**D**OCTOR TREVOR and his young wife were often at Riverside; a swift horse to a light buggy soon covered the five-mile distance. He was always sure of a welcome. The mistress smiled upon him. The young master greeted him cordially. Aunt Dice ministered to him, gradually unbending from her dignified demeanor and favoring him occasionally with her grotesque figures, grimaces, and caricatures, all of which conveyed a moral easily interpreted by the wise observer. Notwithstanding, she watched him closely. John Trevor was still boyish and full of fun. He climbed the hills, hunted in the Barrens, and fished for hours by the deep blue "hole" under the bluff. When called professionally, as he was now the family physician, his first greeting from the double gate was: "Quick, Aunt Dice—my pole and reel! I'll have time for an hour's fishing." Aunt Dice began to wonder if life would ever prove an earnest thing to the pleasure-loving young physician.

True to her word, she rode over to Beechwood at stated intervals on her mistress's riding horse, to look after Anne and her household. These visits John Trevor usually appropriated. To him Aunt Dice was an unfailing source of amusement. He never tired of her droll ways and quaint remarks.



He followed her from kitchen to garden; he chatted with her, questioned her, smoked with her, ever on the alert for a new gesture or original saying. To him she was a study. He delighted in reading to her short, simple stories, content to watch her grave, puzzled face. He ransacked the library for a suitable story, one within the range of her understanding. Ah! he had it—a simple thing, giving in connection with a domestic scene a detailed account of choice eatables, cooked to a turn.

Aunt Dice listened. For once she was on a level with the story. The savor of imaginary viands on an imaginary table smote her nostrils. She interrupted him: "Stop, Mos John! stop! I'm a perishin' fur a piece o' co'nbread—I'm so hungry." Mos John laughed delightedly and—lunched with her.

Aunt Dice's intense pride, her grand air, the majestic sweep of her broad lips, interested as well as amused John Trevor. She never wore gaudy colors, nor used a head handkerchief—a style too significant of the common African type to suit her patrician fancy. Despite her color, she never termed herself a negro. She had pondered long over the problem of her lineage, contenting herself at last with the concession that she sprang from the bluest "blue blood" of far-away Africa. When suggested to her by John Trevor—by reason of gout in her great toe—that she may have descended from a long race of kings,

for centuries used to high living and princely diet (cannibalism was omitted), she listened gravely, and must have believed herself a princess in cotton, for ever afterwards this particular toe received her tenderest consideration. In spite of her precautions, Aunt Dice found within her heart a growing fondness for Mos John. "He ain't been tried yit," she argued; but she carried home a cheerful report to the mistress. "Mos John's a good purvider—a leetle too free-handed with money, but Miss Anne's well keered fur."

Aunt Dice's services were often in demand at Beechwood. One day in the following spring Anne Trevor read in some dismay a note which her husband had laid in her hand. It ran thus:

April 15, 185-.

*My Boy:* I shall drive out next Thursday with a party of friends to spend the day with you.

Have us a good dinner.

Affectionately,

JOHN TREVOR, SR.

"What shall we do?" asked Anne, helplessly. "Too early for vegetables—Eliza so inexperienced—"

"Send for Aunt Dice," advised John, promptly. Aunt Dice was sent for.

"Got many aigs?" she asked, after due explanations.

"Yes, several dozen."

"Then I'll make out. Kill me a sucking pig, Mos John," she said, rising busily; "make the

niggers seine fur fish. Tell 'em I want a sof-shell turtle, sho', fur soup. Gimme one o' your fattes' hens, Miss Anne, an' that'll do fur meat. Git out your bes' table kiver, your gol' ban' chany, ole mistis giv' you, an' see ef your silver needs a shine."

Thus strengthened, the work progressed. Aunt Dice flitted hither and thither, retarded only by the persistent attendance of John Trevor, who enjoyed the pleasant bustle. "He's the wust sp'iled boy I knows of," she said cheerfully. "You'll have to humor him all your days, Miss Anne."

Thursday came, and with it the guests. Aunt Dice surveyed the table with some pride. The sucking pig lay roasted whole, with a rosy apple in his mouth; the fat hen, garnished with parsley and boiled eggs, was brown and juicy; the turtle soup, excellent; the salads, fish, and potatoes, perfect. Crimson jellies and amber wine gleamed rich and warm with the burnished silver and sweet spring flowers. Strong black coffee, served in tiny cups, was sent to the pleasant drawing-room.

John Trevor, Sr., recognized a good dinner. Before his departure he sought Aunt Dice, bent on the usual "tipping," a custom of the times. "Aunt Dice," he said kindly, tendering her a shining coin, "you gave us a good dinner, a good dinner, ma'am. You are an excellent cook, I see."

"Thanky, suh," said Aunt Dice, drawing up her lips; "but I never 'ceive money, suh, fur duty."

“Take your money, madam!” roared the astonished visitor, tossing the coin on the floor and retiring somewhat discomfited. “Zounds! My son, it seems you have an aristocrat in your kitchen.”

“An aristocrat indeed, father!” laughed John Trevor. “A true blue-blooded patrician.”

It was ever a rule with Aunt Dice to make or earn her own living: she kept her fowls and received a steady income for her fancy cookery at the country stores. Beyond the many presents bestowed upon her, which she accepted with a grateful pride, her whole life was spent for others, “without money and without price.”

During the next fall Aunt Dice was sent for on quite a different errand—to the bedside of a sick slave. Charity, the laundress of the family, was ill—stout, able-bodied Charity, who laughed and sang over her tubs and ironing table, but who never found time to consider the possible failure of strength or the ending of life. She was sick unto death, Aunt Dice knew from the first. She watched the young master keenly. He was attentive, skillful as a physician; but would he nurse a sick slave as tenderly as her kind old master had done? One night she went quietly to his room, where he sat reading: “Mos John, Charity’s dyin’, an’ she’s—afeard. Can’t you send to Miss Kath’rine’s fur the preacher?”

“He is not at home, Aunt Dice,” he said, rising; “I will do what I can.”

“You?” She eyed him doubtfully as he took up a Bible from the table.

“Come on.”

“Turn them niggers out, Mos John,” she said as they entered the cabin.

John Trevor sternly ordered out a crowd of negro women, who for hours had been chanting and moaning over the wages of sin and the eternal damnation of the sinner.

Charity lay, with wild, fear-stricken eyes, tossing, turning, muttering over and over the pleading cry, “I’s ’feard to die, Mos John! I’s ’feard to die!”

John Trevor sat by her bedside, and talked to her quietly of the Saviour’s love, his plenteous redemption and free grace; he knelt beside her, and poured out an earnest prayer for peace, for the seal of divine forgiveness. But the wild eyes gazed on him hopelessly; the restless head tossed over the pillow. The horror of death enveloped her. The master opened the Bible and read to her, words of life, of wonderful promises, and of sure fulfillment. He sang to her, in rich, full tones, songs of redeeming love. Still the dying negress moaned and prayed in despair. Again the master knelt, pleading, struggling, persevering, holding up the promises on which he had built his faith.

Aunt Dice, sitting quietly by the hearth, looked at him inquiringly. “Will you give it up?” the mute glance said.

“Until morning light, Aunt Dice,” the master answered, turning to the bed with a firm resolve

on his boyish face, as if he had said, as Jacob did, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Aunt Dice listened reverently, though not without an amazed surprise, as the young master held up before the dying slave a crucified Redeemer—his boundless love and mercy, his wonderful power. Could this be the gay, fun-loving young physician into whose care she had almost feared to trust the child of her rearing? Could this earnest watcher by the bedside be the boy of a short year ago, whom she had questioned so seriously? A beautiful light was shining in his eyes, grown suddenly so dear to her. Words fell from his lips in strange eloquence. Aunt Dice had a higher conception of the Wonderful One that night than she had ever had before. She listened surprisedly, and with quickened pulses, as he told of living waters—of springs in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Through the long hours of the night the master pleaded, prayed, sang, battling against death itself for a purchased soul. The negress lay at last with her eyes upon his face, listening, feeding upon the words of life. The restless tossing ceased. The master sang, in clear, full tones—tones that since have soothed many a dying pillow:

"Are not thy mercies large and free?  
May not a sinner trust in thee?"

A look of peace stole over the dying face. He sang again, softly:

"Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

There was a flash of light, a cry of joy: "Free, Mos John! I'm free—free!"

The sunlight touched the chimney tops at Beechwood, gilded the cabin walls of the quarters, as the soul of the slave, in a transport of joy, sped out on the wings of the morning.

Aunt Dice laid her rough, dark hand on the master's head: "Thar—thar—Mos John; you've done 'nough. Come up to the house, an' rest."

She entered the room where the young wife lay, listening.

"Git up f'om thar, Miss Anne!" she said sharply. "Why ain't you had Mos John a cup o' hot coffee? O, chile!" she cried, breaking into convulsive sobbing, as she noticed the tear-wet pillow, "he'll do—Mos John'll do—ye needn't *never* be afeard."

Mos John had "passed" with her that night.

## CHAPTER IX.

**T**HE old conservative South had many virtues to call her own. Not the least of these was the purity of her religion. Her old aristocracy, her highborn dames and courtly men, thought it no concession to honor the world's Redeemer. In this respect the South may still be called conservative. While she fills her homes with products of northern thrift and invention, while she brightens her firesides with periodicals of northern literary excellence, her libraries, which still honor the well-worn volumes of Bacon, Shakespeare, Bunyan, and Sir Walter Scott, are subservient to and ever as things apart from the Bible, whose living truths are accepted from cover to cover.

Aunt Dice was comforted. "Mos John'll al-lus be faithful," she said. She felt that her young mistress was safe in his care. Her own grandchildren, the motherless ones, would still look up to a kind master. These three grandchildren, who were part of Anne Trevor's marriage portion, were contented and happy at Beechwood. Eliza, the eldest, was quiet and true, much like her honored grandmother; Julia was tall, strong, and willing; while Pet—still a spoiled pet—was very fat and saucy, very good-natured, and very delinquent in her duty sometimes.



The years passed on. The "children" prospered. The olive branches grew. Aunt Dice shared with her mistress the honors of grandmother, and visited back and forth, always a distinguished guest, and always a welcome home-comer. The mistress, who now seldom left Riverside, leaned upon her trusted servant. The young master was still the darling of Aunt Dice's heart. The negroes were happy in the quarters. Charley's children played about her; Aunt Dice was at peace.

With her advancing years a season of rest was a grateful respite to faithful Aunt Dice. But the serenity of her old age was again to be broken by a rumor whose portentous meaning she little understood. A civil war was threatened, and the gloom that settled over the country spoke in prophecy of a darker future.

Aunt Dice had thought but little of political questions. She had lived through the days of ardent Whigism, but had failed to respond to the enthusiasm of the "hard-cider campaign," or any other campaign of political meaning. She had heard of wars, certainly. She had a childish memory of 1812, a dim report that had reached her of Indian warfare and troublous times, but the misfortunes of war she had never realized. She had seen some of her neighbors drill in cumbersome fashion for the Mexican war, and start out on the long journey westward with much military pomp and display. She had seen a remnant return

from its questionable glory, wasted by disease or toughened in experience. Mexico was a dim, distant land to Aunt Dice—too far away to hold her sympathy. Her little world she counted within the boundary of her blue Tennessee hills, or the twenty-mile length of the sparkling, winding river, her loved South Afton.

A civil war, she was told, meant much. She pondered long over the question. She studied with a new interest the portrait of General Winfield Scott which hung over the dining-room mantel at Riverside. Would Mos Sam ever be a stern-faced soldier like this? Her hot-blooded, imperious master, she was sure, would be among the first to take up arms; he who had known no use of arms save his unerring rifle when he followed the baying of his hounds in his famous deer hunting in the Barrens. How could she live without Mos Sam, the light of Riverside?

“We niggers is g’wine ter be free,” was the whispered thought at the quarters. Aunt Dice received such comments with a sharp reprimand and a sidelong look which invited no further argument. But even her strong will could not quell the rising spirit of freedom among the slaves. The meaning of the war, so often spoken of in subdued accents throughout the quarters, dawned slowly upon her. It meant, to her at least, the ruin of Riverside!

The day came when the master, answering the call to arms, prepared to depart; a sad day to

Aunt Dice, who summoned all her stern composure for this strange parting. He knocked at her cabin door that night, as she expected.

“Come in, Mos Sam; tak’ a cheer.” Her pipe trembled slightly in her hand.

The master drew up his chair to the hearth, where a small fire of “chunks” was kept smoldering the summer through. He gave her directions concerning the negroes, the growing cotton and wheat, and other details of plantation affairs.

“I un’erstan’, Mos Sam,” she answered.

He moved his chair restlessly. A shadow, which of late had dimmed the luster of his smile, rested sadly on his brow. Aunt Dice smoked in silence.

“Miss Mary ain’t what she wus sence Mos William died.”

“No?” sadly.

“This war’ll go hard with her.”

He turned with a quick, restless motion: “Watch after her, Aunt Dice; take care of her.”

He drew a folded paper from his pocket, looked over it slowly, and handed it to Aunt Dice.

“Aunt Dice, this gives you your freedom, if you should need it. My mother’s name is signed, and my own. You can use it as you choose.”

Aunt Dice took the paper gingerly, between finger and thumb, and laid it promptly on the coals.

“You don’t know what may happen, Aunt Dice. You are never to be sold again.”

“I’ll hold my own; you needn’t be afeard. I

knows my business; Mos William tole me that afore he died. I b'longs to ole mistis as long as she live—then I'm yourn, 'ceptin' I'm to look after the chillun when they's sick, or when they needs help. You needn't bother 'bout me. The wust trubble is all these nigger fam'lies you've bought in at the sale."

"You knew my father's request, Aunt Dice—they were not to be sold or divided unwillingly."

"That's so. You wus to buy in all who wus onwillin' to be 'vided out, an' more'n plenty wus onwillin' enuff to make a putty big debt—what ain't paid *yit*."

"Riverside will soon cancel it, Aunt Dice."

"But stop, Mos Sam. Mos William didn't know 'bout this war a-comin' on. You'd sho' be ruined if the niggers wus sot free."

"Aunt Dice," flashed the young master, "do you mean to say the South will be whipped?"

"I jes' mean—I don' know," said Aunt Dice, sorrowfully. She leaned over the coals, her head showing silvery in the faint light. There was a pathetic droop about her shoulders, an old look in her bent form.

"Cheer up, Granny Vic," said the master, turning upon her the warmth of his sunny smile. "This war will soon be over; then for a merry wedding at Riverside! You shall rule master, mistress, niggers, and all."

"Who is it, Mos Sam?" she asked, composedly.

“The little girl who minces when she walks, who fidgets in church, and giggles incessantly.”

Aunt Dice’s long lip quivered, swung back and forth, and dropped with the senseless stupor of a slobbering horse, finishing with a smirk, a giggle, so successfully imitating the “little girl” in question that the cabin rang with the master’s laughter.

“Oh well, Aunt Dice, the one-hundred-and-fifty-pounder, who rides neck-to-neck with Fleetfoot, and is always ‘in at the death’ in a fox chase.”

“Too bold an’ for’ard, Mos Sam—too bold an’ for’ard, fur Mos William’s son,” she said, sternly. There was silence. Aunt Dice resumed her smoking.

“Why not some o’ your neighbor gals—they’re all likely.”

“Indeed they are—and worthy,” said the master.

Aunt Dice looked stolidly at the fire. Her calm indifference betrayed no hint of curiosity.

“Aunt Dice, what about the girl with the sweet, proud look?”

“Thar! I knowed it was a-comin’; I knowed it. She’s a good ’oman, Mos Sam—a fine ’oman. I’ve seen her time an’ ag’in at Beechwood. She’ll make a likely mistis fur Riverside—one you’ll be proud of.”

Mos Sam whistled softly, a shadow chasing away the sunshine of his smile. After all, Riverside may never know the woman of his choice as its

fair mistress. His own life may be offered up on a battlefield, his body uncoffined, his very name unknown in a strange land. "Good-night, Aunt Dice," he said, at length, turning to the door.

"Mos Sam?" Aunt Dice considered that she had always found a cheerful word to lighten a heavy heart. Her boy should not leave her door without the memory of a smile. "I've allus been ag'in your fightin' as a boy," she continued, "but ef you sees that Yankee school-teacher, you may whup him—wunst."

"All right, Granny Vic!" laughed the master. "I'll thrash him for your sake."

Next morning the master stood on the lawn with his faithful servant, ready for his departure; a bright June morning, when Riverside looked her fairest: the old home smiling from her cool galleries and shady maples; her pastures dotted with sheep and cattle, and tinkling with sounds of peace; her gardens abloom with roses, and the river shimmering and dreaming at her feet! The group of negroes in the background did not detract from the picture, though their wails mingled with the deep-mouthed baying of the master's hounds, who were soon to forget the music of his hunting horn.

But the master, whose keen eye had taken in his surroundings at a glance, now lingered under the maples with a restless tread, the strained pressure of his lips revealing only a hard white line about his mouth. He little heeded the glorious beauty of Riverside. His hounds fawned upon

him, unnoticed. The group of friends, the grief-stricken faces of his sisters—Anne and Katherine—the kindly sympathy in John Trevor's eyes, he did not see; he only saw a delicate figure gowned in gray standing on the gallery, whose hair shone with faint gleams of silver through the soft muslin cap.

In this supreme moment the questions of state or country seemed strangely small beside the little mother who stood before him, mighty in her love; the little mother within whose arms all his childish griefs and pains had been rocked to sleep. Friend and foe were alike to him for the while—unworthy of a touch of her garments. Not even the memory of a fair, proud face intruded upon this sacred parting which tried the souls of mother and son; a parting which she mercifully shortened by turning quietly into her room without even a mother's caress, lest the action prove too strong a test of her fortitude, or weaken the courage of her soldier boy. The quick splashing of horses' feet crossing the river cut the air with a sickening sense of grief and loss.

Aunt Dice was left the central figure of the thronging group of slaves, her tears on her dusky cheeks, the sunlight on her gray head, and a new care in her heart, for the master had said at parting, "Aunt Dice, I leave to you my mother and my home."

## CHAPTER X.



YEAR passed slowly. The mistress, who had so bravely hung up her blue chintz gowns and donned the colors of her son, seemed to falter through the long silence which brought no news of him. She followed Aunt Dice about like a shadow, which often sent the faithful watcher to her cabin in hot haste for a troubled smoke and a struggle for fortitude.

“Aunt Dice, can you bring your knitting and sit with me awhile at night?”

“To be sho’ I kin. What’s to hender me?”

Aunt Dice never knew how she smiled or brought herself to gossip, and tell her “silly nothings,” as they sat together at night, knitting socks for “rebel” soldiers; she never knew how she changed from a decisive, short-spoken woman to a loquacious, ceaseless talker; she only knew that she had gained her end when rewarded by a patient smile. She discussed the weather, the flight of wild geese, the soap-making, the spinning and weaving, the young calves, the spring lambs; she talked of old, old times, of far-away memories—anything and everything but the children, lest the thought bring up the absent boy, whose name was never mentioned. She searched the place for an atom of news. “Ole Topknot’s in



fur anuther settin' spell. Sousin' in the river don' do no good, so I sot her on goose aigs; she'll git settin' 'nough now fur a spell, I reck'n. Topknots ain't noted fur sense. The mockin' birds is splittin' they throats; they's feelin' the springtime"—she would say, to tempt her mistress out into the soft April sunshine; or, "The dogwood's blossomin' an' the redbud in the hills —'tain't long afore spring." Still the frail, tired body faded slowly.

"Remember my poor, Aunt Dice," the mistress said one day; and then the faithful watcher knew that, with all her care, her multiplied words and cheerful encouragement had been in vain. John Trevor was her help and comfort; he gave to Riverside all the time that his growing practice and growing family would admit. But all the tenderness of faithful friends could not avail. Before the close of spring the gentle soul of the mistress went out, to know no sad to-morrow of that gloomy time. Aunt Dice stood alone—terribly alone! Shocked, amazed at the magnitude of her duty, but one thought spurred her on—the thought of her master.

"Mos Sam is ruined," Aunt Dice said, as she closed the doors of Riverside, after the sad funeral. The negroes no longer made a show of submission. Riverside was burdened with debt and crowded with rebellious slaves; a turbulent spirit had risen among them, which Aunt Dice found impossible to quell. She man-

aged with difficulty to till the land and gather the crop. A new suspicion filled her with dread. Charley, her own son, whose purchase money had swelled the debt of Riverside, was dictatorial, rebellious, a disturbing element in the quarters. She upbraided him sternly; she commanded, implored, entreated, but an angry, sullen look was the only response. She pointed to a tall marble shaft which shone solemnly from the cemetery: "Fur Mos William's sake, Charley, don' leave Mos Sam."

"G'way f'om here, mammy; lemme 'lone. I'm g'wine to Nashvul, *I* is, an' be a free gen'l'mun. I'll tote fur no man f'om dis here on."

Her pleading was vain. Charley's cabin was empty one morning. Aunt Dice was bereft.

Thus her long watch began. She saw the negroes depart, slaves no longer, swelling day after day the number of them who had "run off to the Yankees." But the glory of Riverside had also departed. She saw the old home shorn of its beauty; the fences were burned, the barns emptied, the cattle, horses, and sheep driven off or slaughtered; the home of her beloved mistress desecrated and pillaged under the cruel ravages of war. Even the tall clock in the dining-room corner, which had ticked in and out the happy years of Riverside's prosperity, stood with a white, dismayed face, its glass doors shattered, its pendulum crushed and broken, its faithful hands ruthlessly torn from their place of duty; the old clock, which had rung in

the births, chimed at the weddings, and tolled out the deaths at Riverside, stared now from its corner like a human thing bereft of a soul!

Aunt Dice heard nothing of the master; still her lonely watch went on, and she said to herself sometimes as a sad refrain: "Mos Sam, you're ruined—you're ruined!" The long winters passed; the dull "wash-wash" of the river sounded on her listening ears. The summers came and went; the whippoorwills called from the cemetery, the mocking birds trilled in the maples, the river murmured like a friend at her feet—still the master came not. News of him floated to her at last between the silences: Mos Sam was a brave soldier—was captain of a company—was wounded—in prison; then she heard no more.

Once only did her heart fail. A squad of Confederate soldiers passing by one day saw a pathetic figure standing over the bluff, beckoning to them.

"*Whar* is Mos Sam?" she quavered, thinking in her innocent soul that all the world should know "Mos Sam."

"Dead!" "killed!" "shot!" came back to her in a rude, laughing chorus.

"I jes' whooped an' hollered all night," she said to a kind neighbor, who reassured her.

Her fidelity did not go unquestioned. Her own color eyed her askance as a friend to the "rebels." Among her white neighbors some looked on her with suspicion, as possibly harboring Federals; she was accordingly visited by a company

of blue-coated soldiers, who threatened her with fire, steel, and ugly army pistols if she did not disclose to them the hiding place of some "rebels" in the vicinity. But her stern old eyes did not quail. She knew not the meaning of "martyr"; she had never heard of a "noble Roman"; but her one lesson of faithfulness she had learned well. The soldiers passed over the river with a rousing cheer for Aunt Dice; then she realized sadly that she had been under trial.

Still she sowed her scanty seed and reaped her shattered harvests. The little worn path over the bluff by the river told of her weekly visits to the nearest store, where she sold her chickens and eggs; told also of as many visits to the cemetery, where, on these errands, it was her habit to sit and rest, alone with her dead. Years before she had planted in an oblong circle about Cæsar's grave those early harbingers of spring—golden candlesticks—which, when aflame in early March, lit up the somber cedars, and made a glorious altarpiece of the simple headstone. Here she rested on her weekly journeys.

Aunt Dice realized at last that the end of the great civil war was near—a disastrous ending for the South, but peace was none the less welcome. The golden candlesticks had bloomed again around Cæsar's grave when the blessed news came—the long war was over.

Where was Mos Sam? How she scraped and saved and hoarded! How she watched and waited

in the silence! How she hoped and feared and prayed in the solitude of her lonely cabin!

But the master rode in quietly one night in the light of the young moon, stabled his Yankee mare, climbed the rickety fence by the deserted quarters, and looked over his desolate home. The river murmuring below, the lazy "swish-swish" of her waters against the rocks, were the only sounds that greeted him. At length a familiar figure came slowly down the path, with bowed head, and hands folded behind her. "Aunt Dice!" he called softly. She looked up quickly, knowing well the square shoulders outlined against the twilight sky; then running to him swiftly, she fell on her knees at his feet, taking up the old refrain: "Mos Sam, you're ruined—you're ruined!"

Her strength gave way at last; her strained nerves relaxed. She had bravely dared those four long years alone. Her trust was fulfilled. She continued sobbing at his feet.

"Don't grieve, Aunt Dice," the master said, sadly. "Your boy has come back to you, and he is half starved."

Aunt Dice listened. She had heard complaints of a half-starved boy before, though never so sadly as this. She dried her tears suddenly. She hoarded her sweet surprise. "Nuthin' in the house fitten' fur you to eat, Mos Sam—nuthin' but a piece o' co'n bread."

"Give me one of your good, brown corn ponies, Aunt Dice," said the master, cheerfully.

She followed him to the house, unlocked the doors, brought him cool water from the great spring under the bluff; and while he looked over the silent rooms—so strangely silent, without a mother's welcome—Aunt Dice prepared her surprise, for which she had lived on husks! She had long waited for this hour. With deft hands and springing step she flitted back and forth, from kitchen to dining room, grown young again in her great joy. Her dear old eyes, dim with watching, shone bright through happy tears.

And such a repast! Corn pones, brown enough; but such flaky biscuits, such fragrant coffee; and chicken, fried a delicate brown! She did not stop to consider or even conjecture what stint and frugality, under the prevailing prices, brought forth these treasures of coffee, lard, and flour. She poured the coffee, waiting upon her master, watching him, who ate as if all those pent-up years of hunger and starvation were requited in that one meal!

Nor was this all. After she had built a fire in the late mistress's room, where the little armchair beckoned silently from its corner—which room was to be from henceforth Mos Sam's own, with all its sacred memories—Aunt Dice laid out before the master various articles of dress, sorely needed by him, saying, with characteristic brevity: "The chillun helped me. Miss Kath'rine made the clo'es, Miss Anne the shurts. Mos John giv' you the boots—they cos' fifty dollars."

“Why, Aunt Dice, what a fortune!” the master said, delightedly. “I shall be a gentleman again—not a poor ‘Johnny Reb’”—stroking his ragged, gray sleeve—“poor ‘Johnny Reb!’”

Aunt Dice looked at her master with some asperity. She had fed many a tramp who looked more decent. “I’ve sot your bath tub at the door,” she said, in the old tone of command. “Th’ow them rags in the fire, Mos Sam. I never thought Mos William’s son’d a looked like that.” She turned to bid him good-night.

“Aunt Dice,” said the master, looking far into the flaming coals, “I saw your Yankee school-master.”

“Did you whup him?” she asked, quickly. Her added knowledge of the Yankee had rather stimulated her desire for this particular whipping.

“No,” he answered slowly; “I must say your Yankee friend whipped me.”

Aunt Dice looked at her master in amazed inquiry. He met her glance thoughtfully. “I was in prison, and he visited me.”

“Thar now!” said Aunt Dice. “Well, I’m glad I washed an’ orned his clo’es, an’ dorned all his socks. I allus thought he had a hankerin’ a’ter Miss Kath’rine!”

“I think he liked her,” said the master, musingly.

## CHAPTER XI.

**T**HROUGHOUT the year the table was supplied, the master knew not how; not poorly or sparingly kept, but almost with the generous excellency of former days. The master little dreamed of the struggle as, weak from recent wounds, he built fences, or plowed his Yankee mare beside a venerable riding-horse which was once his mother's. Too proud to acknowledge that she lived by her wits, Aunt Dice smuggled to the country store her chickens, eggs, and butter, her fancy cookies and gingerbread, so that her slender purse held out as did the proverbial meal barrel.

Yet the year was a happy one. It was her pleasure to labor with unceasing thrift to provide these luxuries; her pride to lend a helping hand to the upbuilding of her master's broken fortunes. It was a happy year, notwithstanding the new burden of debt which lay heavily upon the master. He was forced to borrow a sufficient sum to build up the waste places, to buy grain and stock, and for the additional expense of hire—a new experience for the impoverished southerner. His impatient soul chafed under the fretting weight. "What shall I do, Aunt Dice?" he asked one day, in an extremity of doubt and distress.

Aunt Dice glanced at him quickly and started



in a swift trot for her cabin. A new problem this for her sixty-sixth year! She smoked her faithful pipe while she studied. What was to be done? Sell Riverside? Oh no! She pondered, questioned, considered. After all there was but one way, she concluded, as she laid her pipe on the shelf. She went back cheerfully. "Shoulder your debts, Mos Sam; you can't shift 'em. Go 'long now to work. Go 'long, les'n you don't want no br'iled chicken *an'* waffles fur supper."

Mos Sam was comforted, somehow.

At this time a message from Joe Cris, who was earning a precarious living by basket-making near Nashville, startled Aunt Dice into remembrance of her painful past. He sent her his humble regards; also an invitation to share with him his home and small living. Aunt Dice spurned the offer with contempt, and returned a sharp answer, with the significant question, "Is you a fool?" For this Aunt Dice may have been censured. Indeed, it was evident that she, who had ever been so responsive to the slightest call of duty, was strangely delinquent in the obligations of her second marriage. But her conscience in this respect was a matter of education. Tutored in her one school of faithfulness—that of allegiance to her white people—she scorned all persuasion, advantageous or otherwise, to leave her beloved Riverside. Perhaps, too, she felt that she had been unfairly bought. Joe Cris had no great claim upon her. Moreover, in the days following their

freedom, many of the negroes were uncertain breadwinners. Improvident in summer; ragged, shivering, or homeless in winter; they too often made a pitiable spectacle of gaunt hunger and wretchedness. The question of bread, clothing, and shelter had a broader meaning than they had realized. The dependent slaves found in their freedom such cares and responsibilities that robbed the word of much of its sweetness and flavor. Many, chary of their wings, remained within the security of their former homes; some stayed through pure devotion to their masters, while a large number, trained to divers trades, earned a comfortable living. Aunt Dice had small confidence in the ability of the negro, much less would she trust herself in the keeping of one. Nevertheless, she made it her duty to send Joe Cris gifts of clothing and money as long as he lived. Mos Sam needed her; she would not leave him.

With the next year's increase Riverside began to assume an *ante-bellum* look; not with the old prosperity, for loans and mortgages were the questions of the day, but the long deserted cabins were peopled with dusky forms, some of whom were former slaves.

Aunt Dice began again her imperious rule and discipline. The old fields crept into life. The rolling uplands were covered in billowy wheat. The tinkling of sheep bells sounded a call of peace, while the river sang in her old happy way, for the master was to bring home a bride in the late fall—

the woman with the "sweet, proud look," whose love had bidden him hope through five dark years. Fortunately for Aunt Dice, the soon-to-be mistress held a high place in her esteem. As the time approached, she began preparations for the wedding.

The day dawned cold and snowy. "Fix up things, Aunt Dice," said the master, as he departed for his twenty-mile ride to Nashville. She needed no further order. When the wedding party returned she met them on the lawn in stately fashion, her master's hounds baying about her. The old home smiled with the warmth of old-fashioned southern hospitality. The hickory fires roared up the chimneys in generous welcome. The long table in the dining room gleamed and glittered with the evidences that Aunt Dice's faithful hands had not lost their cunning.

There were eight long years of quiet for Riverside; years that were golden with hope and rich with its promises; years of peace and rest after the turbulent season of war. Children played again under the maples. Childish laughter rang through the cool galleries. The new mistress reigned with a queenly grace and charm of manner that held captive the esteem of all South Af-ton. Indeed, the country folk soon learned to love the strange woman in their midst, who was so wondrous kind and sweet.

Aunt Dice never criticised her. She never made her mistress a subject of her trying mim-

icry, but invariably held her up to the numerous grandchildren as a model of gracious dignity and charming womanhood. But Mos Sam was still the darling of Aunt Dice's heart. To him she filled the office of mother in more ways than one. The responsibilities of this relation she did not shirk. If she thought he needed reproof, she was quick and stern in giving it. "Git up f'om thar, Mos Sam, complainin' of your woun's, an' wishin' ye had a millyun. Go to work. Money won't walk to ye." Such rebukes were wholesome, and never out of place in the days when the debt problem was an unanswered one and a grievous burden to the southern landowner.

Aunt Dice may have saved her master from a fatal despondency in his straitened circumstances by her kindly words of cheer, or a caustic rebuke which she covered adroitly with a quaint remark, sure to bring a smile; but much more did she prefer to honor him with all the doting fondness of a mother.

"Anything in your cupboard for me, Aunt Dice?" was the frequent question.

"Dunno, Mos Sam," she would answer, almost ignoring the question; "ye'd better look."

He was sure to find a generous store—whitest bread and honey, cold chicken, her famous pies and cookies, which were noted for their excellence.

These were her happy hours. He was all her own when he sat with her in her cabin and talked with her of the old times, the days of her kind old master.

## CHAPTER XII.

**T**HE subject of the war was a sore one to Aunt Dice. She looked upon it as a personal matter, deploring the thought that her own people had caused the ruin of Riverside—had impoverished her dear young master. She tried to bury this sorrow quietly as she had buried her other griefs, but she could not order the thoughts of her master nor bid his bitter memories be gone. She knew that the war spirit controlled him when she saw his restless pacing back and forth; the nervous twitch of his fingers, as if they longed to draw a sword; the quick flash of his eyes, as if the vision of a hard-fought battle rose up before him, or the roar of cannon and musketry lingered in his ears.

“Debt ain’t all he’s a studyin’ over,” Aunt Dice said. She watched him as he sat on the gallery, gazing with far-seeing eyes across the dimpling, smiling river.

“Aunt Dice, I would gladly fight through four years more—go hungry, ragged; sleep in snow-drifts, by the wayside, anywhere—just to try the whole thing over.”

“Mos Sam, let the war go. What good *do* it do to set an’ study over it? It’s all pas’ an’ gone now; make the best of it.”

But the blood of his comrades, so sadly spilled in vain, called to him pleadingly. The negroes he did not care to have, and would not own again. It was the stupendous failure of a stupendous undertaking that chafed and nettled his imperious nature. He felt whipped. The reflection was anything but consoling. In these sad hours he felt that he had offered upon the altar of his country all that was truest and best within him. Only a soldier of fortune was left, warped and frayed as the clothes he wore home. He turned to his wife in the bitterness of his soul, and held her close in his arms. "What can I promise my Helen, the wife of a poor rebel soldier?"

"This 'poor rebel soldier' is my brave knight," she answered, smiling.

These seasons of unrest were happily transient. Life was still before him. His winning smile and genial manner still earned for him the honored title of the "Light of Riverside." The hired "work hands" in the cabins were under the just and temperate rule of a kind "boss," a convenient substitute for the word master.

Aunt Dice's three granddaughters, after varied experiences, were married and established at Riverside, where their husbands worked "on shares," or for wages, for their necessary food and clothing. But Charley belonged to the numberless horde of swarthy citizens who termed themselves the "new niggers." He had shaken the dust of Riverside forever from his feet, save for an occa-

sional visit to his mother, whither he went sometimes in a hired buggy, with jaunty horse and trappings; sometimes, however, riding a gaunt, bony mule; but more often afoot, ragged, unkempt, and hungry. After such visits Aunt Dice's purse was left in a collapsed state.

But the "new niggers!" "Ho, for Nashville!" seemed to be the watchword and cry of liberated thousands—a greater problem by far than all the debts and mortgages that covered the sunny lands of Tennessee. Into Nashville they poured, a living stream of life, fearfully free. They swarmed the streets, crowded the corners, obstructed the sidewalks, while dainty ladies stepped aside, and white men muttered nameless maledictions through their closed teeth. Whether in vehicles or shining "turnouts," or shaky rattle-traps, the new negroes kept the center of the road, to see the "white man pass round," without the customary greeting or doffing of hat or cap. In the depths of the country the fields and woods were strangely silent. There was a dearth of old-time melodies, of feasting and revelry. The musical calls and sound of the sweet cane flutes gave place to a new song, if song it could be called, replete with a significant triumph:

"Possum up a gum stump, coon up a holler,  
I met dat white man, an' he owed me a dollar."

The word "master," too, had fallen into disuse, and "Mr. and Mrs." Brown were substituted, and rolled under tongues too thick to conceal a

malicious pleasure, which stung the southerner oftentimes to quick resentment.

Aunt Dice knew at a glance the fortunate ones who applied at Riverside for situations. The master, who still, as he gave them to understand, was lord of his own domain, kindly received the applicant who stood before him with bared head and called him "Mos Sam" in the old-time way. Not that he commanded or required this humble obeisance; but knowing the negro well, he knew the conservative ones to be the most worthy, and as such were apt to be for a generation or more to follow.

When Archibald, a stalwart youth of twenty-one—a former slave who had been "onwillin' to be 'vided out" at the sale—appeared at Riverside for a comfortable dinner and a possible job, Aunt Dice looked him over dubiously. His dashing appearance, his display of brass jewelry, his stylishly carded hair, betokened little favor from the master. When about to pay his "'spects to de boss," Aunt Dice called out warningly: "Min' your manners, Arch, I tell you; min' your manners."

But Archibald, brimful of freedom and the importance of his twenty-one years, stepped jauntily to the master's front door. "Howdy, Mr. Macy. How's Mrs. Macy, yo' lady?" Archibald felt a grip of steel within his collar for answer, and a kick which caused him to measure his length under the maples.



“You might as well go now, Arch,” said Aunt Dice, quietly observant from the kitchen. “Manners is cheap, an’ mighty handy sometimes.”

Aunt Dice, under the new order of things, was extremely exclusive in her social life. Few colored people she tolerated, fewer still she visited; on such occasions her “grand air” was most noticeable. She still held her membership with her white people’s church, and condescended once a year to attend a colored congregation near by, where their wild gestures and noisy worship disgusted and annoyed her. Still she was not without a certain interest in her own race. She deplored their failings, encouraged every honest effort, and lent a helping hand to every worthy applicant. She might have been what is termed a “white folks’ nigger,” one who is cordially hated and distrusted by his own people, especially as he prospers by his white “liking.” But certain it was that Aunt Dice, bravely as she dared their suspicion, commanded the respect, if she did not gain the love, of her colored acquaintances. Born a slave, this unreconstructed soul never acknowledged her freedom, and scorned the offer of wages at the close of the war. Feeling that she belonged to her white people, and almost one of them, no national proclamation of freedom swerved her allegiance to them for an instant. Among her white neighbors she was ever treated with distinguished regard. On her usual church goings, or weekly visits to the store, she never

lacked attention and courtesy due a lady. Indeed, so honest was she in all her dealings, so well grounded in truth and purity of character, that no instance was ever known when her self-respect went begging.

The new mistress was not slow to learn the value of Aunt Dice as friend and adviser; nor did she hesitate to accept her companionship as a boon at lonely Riverside. Aunt Dice's afternoon nap was an unvarying rule of the house—an hour which the mistress found to be irksome waiting, as she was usually favored with an afternoon call, now that the spinning wheels were silent, and leisure hours numerous. The sight of Aunt Dice's homely, squat figure, as she sat on the low doorstep with her fragrant pipe, was a pleasant one to the mistress, who began to look forward to these daily visits. Aunt Dice, coming up the path from her cabin, often saw the stately figure of her mistress pacing the length of the gallery, and heard her clear, rich tones greeting her: "Aunt Dice, how long your naps are! I have been waiting an hour or more for you."

"Well, you wus in a hurry," Aunt Dice would say composedly, seating herself on the step, and watching the mistress's delicate hands flash in and out with her dainty lace-making. Perhaps the lovely lady of Riverside was lonely at times when the master was absent; perhaps she felt a tender longing for her bright Nashville home—a home of unusual affection and charming personalities.

Aunt Dice was considerate. She understood the tender look across the river and up the long lane that stretched its way toward Nashville. She interested her mistress in household affairs, instructed her in the secrets of the dairy, the raising of fowls, and other minor duties of the country housekeeper. Helen Macy was a happy woman with her husband and children about her, and frequent glimpses of her beloved brother, John Trevor. Riverside was still a pleasant home, and not without its comforts, though groaning still under the burden of debt, and too poor by far to afford her the luxury of a piano, or even her favorite books. But she loved the smiling river—blue, dimpling South Afton; she never tired of the rugged bluffs, the dizzy cliffs, clothed and crowned with verdure; she loved the breezy uplands, the distant hills sleeping in yellow sunshine; she was fond of the old house with its quaint architecture, its cool, wide rooms; she was happy at Riverside. “I am really thinking, Sam, of wearing print gowns,” she said one day. And print gowns she wore, even to the critical eyes of her husband, as a queen “her purple robe.”

“Sing, Helen,” the master sometimes said as they sat together on the moonlit gallery; and Helen sang.

The negroes crowded to their cabin doors. “Hush! Miss Helen’s singin’.”

Aunt Dice listened from her pleasant back gar-

den. The river lapped softly, while the sweet, rich voice of the mistress trembled and soared with the song of a river hardly more romantic in scene than the lovely one at her feet: "Flow gently, sweet Afton." The old, old songs rang full and clear: the music of "Convent Bells"; the lover's old song, "When the stars are in the quiet sky"; and "Kathleen Mavourneen." The master, whose eyes grew stormy under "Maryland, my Maryland," were quiet and tender when he listened to a glad "Gloria," or "Come, ye disconsolate."

The new mistress found in Aunt Dice an efficient help in dispensing hospitalities. With her conservative ways she was a pleasant feature of social gatherings at Riverside. The old sideboard, with its array of decanters and sparkling crystal, was a thing of the past, but her ingenuity proved more than equal to its loss. It was her pleasure to plan surprises for guests or afternoon callers—to spread a table under the maples, or improvise a dainty lunch on a tray covered in spotless linen, for those only whom she favored. If she felt that Riverside was honored, she "opened her heart"; otherwise, she was significantly silent. Yet she made a pathetic picture, bearing in her trembling hands these offerings of old-fashioned hospitality, these testimonials of her "family pride." The house, too, was brightened occasionally with family gatherings, and often filled to overflowing with the children—Aunt Dice's "gran'chillun," as she

called them. They played on the lawn, waded in the shallows of the river; gathered mussel shells and periwinkles on the sand bar; "kept house," and played "ladies," on the great rocks by the "Branch." They swarmed on the galleries, up the quaint stairways, and peeped fearfully into the depths of the dark "scuttle hole." A visit to Aunt Dice's cabin was a ceremonial not to be overlooked; there they were treated to the same discipline, the same grimaces, contortions, and humiliating caricatures that their mothers were of old, to say nothing of the open cupboard doors as an aftermath. Valuable lessons, too, they learned in that humble cabin; one of which, at least, was never forgotten—to "speed the parting guest," a maxim which finds an echo in many a hostess's heart. "I must go, Granny," said often and reluctantly, brought forth from her the wholesome advice: "When ye say 'go,' go. Don't palaver 'bout it." A form of good-by which certainly speeded the "parting guest."

The visits of these grandchildren Aunt Dice demanded. She exacted a certain amount of deference due her. She required them to pay their respects to her at stated intervals, a duty which they were not loath to do; but "'nough of a thing wus 'nough," she said. "Time you chillun wus gittin' 'long home now," she would command, after a protracted stay. When they pleaded for one day more, Aunt Dice was firm. In spite of the protestations of the mistress, though much to

the amusement of the master, who knew the hold she kept upon his purse strings in those straitened times, Aunt Dice ruled. "Go 'long, chillun"—be it whispered once, and forever relegated to the shades in the interests of southern hospitality; "go 'long—Mos Sam's flour barrel's a gittin' low."

### CHAPTER XIII.

**B**EECHWOOD was a memory only. A cluster of tall chimneys told where the pleasant mansion had stood, while grass and weeds grew about the deserted cabins. The lands, no longer a family possession, were divided into several farms under enterprising owners. Doctor Trevor, who had removed to the village of P——, close by, owned a small farm within its limits, the cottage and office fronting the village street or pike. “Vine Cottage” it was called, from the riotous growth of vines—rose, clematis, and wild honeysuckle—over the trees, porches, and fences. In front ran a brooklet, falling across a bend in the pike, forming a miniature cataract, which the children called “Niagara Falls”—in the winter only; the summer found its dry bed a rich field for a playground.

The farm, beyond a few acres in cultivation, rounded into hills, bristled into thickets, or gaped into gullies—another convenient playground for the children, provided they were regardless of clean frocks and constitutionally fond of clay pies; a farm which conveyed less than half the meaning of the word, and left a rich overplus in woody depths and dewy dingles; in thickets musical with birds and fragrant with wild flowers; in orchards where bees hung drowsily over seas of pink and

white bloom, where the fruit was the rosiest and most luscious; in gardens where big red roses ran riot over squashes and melons, of the sweetest and best. Morning-glories gloried in the corn, and flung their purple banners from the topmost tasseling; raspberries ripened along the hillsides and narrow paths; dewberry vines scrambled over gullies and ran helter-skelter through the best bottom field, bearing their luscious fruit. The old beeches, crowning the hill pasture, were the shadiest in the whole country round; while the willows, fringing the streamlet at its base, listened to a musical rhyme never dreamed of by the farmer's boy who plowed his weary way on the opposite hillsides. Rural beauty held here a peaceful reign; rural sights and sounds were undisturbed by the hurrying bustle of busy life. Hawks sailed lazily overhead; owls brooded in hollow trees; the blue heron dreamed in the swamp; while the crows cawed from the treetops through the livelong days. The spirits of the woods—the birds, the flowers—driven from the carefully husbanded soil of the neighboring hills, gathered here for a continual jubilee, and sang and grew and sported within their wonted haunts—the leafy coverts of Vine Cottage farm.

John Trevor, though he had suffered reverses during the trying times of war, and was struggling with others to master the question of debt, possessed still a characteristic buoyancy and hopeful-



ness of disposition. Busy with a heavy practice, and his wife and children depending solely upon him, he was still a "good purvider," as Aunt Dice had said. She never had cause to retract her decision of his faithfulness and worth. Stone by stone he had built an honored name in the place of his adoption. Older heads than his looked up to him, and steady farmers of long experience and varied wisdom looked kindly upon him and trusted him.

In his busy life he had little time for his wonted sports and pleasures. Through the more leisure month of May, a few hours spent on the banks of his beloved South Afton with rod and line was the only recreation permitted him from year's end to year's end. There, while the soft swish of the waters against the rocks, the smiling sky overhead, the calling of birds from the fields, rested and refreshed him, he lived a different life for the time—something apart from the pill-making, prescription-writing duties of workyday hours.

"Mos John'll never grow ole," Aunt Dice said; "he keep his heart young." All that she saw lovely and beautiful in nature she called his. The blue skies and sailing white clouds, the wayside flowers, all that the country physician saw and noted through the long lanes, by the hill ridge roads or the dusty pikes; even the squirrels that chattered from the trees or sported along rock walls and rail fences—all were his. "Mos John's martins is come," she would say in the

spring; or, "I hear Mos John's little flute bird," of the sweet-throated thrush. The cooing spring doves, the whistling summer partridges, all were Mos John's. "The birds is singin' fur Mos John," she was wont to say, as if she thought that nature knew and loved her own, or that the skies smiled more sweetly over the daily walk of one beneath who was so earnest and true. She began to watch jealously the solitary fisherman by the bluff spring in the spare hours of the May-time seasons. "You'se got a call, Mos John; I hates to tell ye," she said sometimes, showing her silvered head over the bluff. "'Pears like ye might have a leetle res'."

"Never mind, Aunt Dice," answered the country physician, cheerfully. "I shall take a trip to the mountains some time in the near future, and for two whole weeks I shall rest and forget all the world of aches and pains."

"To be sho' ye might," she said. The far-off mountains had grown suddenly interesting to her, since they held in reserve a rest and solace for the tired physician.

From the first year of his career John Trevor had resolved upon this little recreation—two long weeks to spend upon the mountains, among the mountain brooks and speckled trout. It was a picture framed in his mind which cheered him often by the lonely wayside. But the pleasant vision flitted before him like a mirage of the desert. The earnestness of his profession had

developed through sober experience. Resolutions formed within him under the kindly admonitions of college lecturers had grown to a steady purpose. The years of his youth, it was true, had been spent mainly in the upbuilding of his practice, in overcoming prejudices against his inexperience, and perhaps more than all his outcropping progressive ideas. None the less, too, did he know that he had run the gauntlet through the length and breadth of his practice in matters of religion, morals, and politics; in which he was fairly successful, he was pleased to remember. His modest little debt, though only the sum of a few hundreds, had assumed a proportion to his income which caused him to waken occasionally at night and stare blindly into darkness, trying to conjecture the best possible mode of payment; a problem he needed not to have considered, were all those unpaid accounts which accumulated in his office desk forthcoming. Nevertheless, in the prime of his manhood he contemplated with some pleasure the wide bounds of his substantial practice. He had won. He had paid his debt also, laboriously it was true, dollar by dollar, but freedom was all the more grateful. Still the vision of mountain brooks and speckled trout was yet unrealized. He had never found time to take his recreation of two long, whole weeks, when he was to forget disease and all its unlovely aspects. New duties crowded upon him, new calls upon his time and purse. His growing family, his

church, his people, filled up the measure of his busy life. Naturally, there were divers kinds to please among his people, as he chose to call them: some who were shrewd and calculating, weighing carefully the issues of life and death in the balance with the doctor's bill; peremptory ones, who excused no time or circumstance; and others, though few in number, who were quick to censure and slow to acknowledge a kindly deed. But the friends who loved and trusted him, these were they whose homes were his resting places along the way; within whose homes, too, he remembered, he had done his most valiant battling with the terror, death. Many a palm had he borne aloft, when patient and nurse fell into line with him against the foe.

So the seasons rolled away year after year, and he learned with their changes the coldest sweep of the windy hillsides, the longest lanes of the hot summer's sun. Night had grown as familiar to him as the broad light of day; he knew its sights and sounds—the shadowy woods and cry of night-birds, the pale, cold moonlight, the solemn stars. The elements kept him familiar company—the whistling winds, the shrouding snow, the down-pouring rain.

Many a night had he lifted the latch of the little gate, tired, cold, and hungry; but never too tired or cold or hungry to neglect his patient horse, the companion of his journeyings. As was natural to his profession, he was a careful man, and conscien-

tious in the smallest detail of everyday life. The little gate was carefully latched, the stable door as carefully fastened, the doors and windows of his home tested, the kitchen fire inspected, and the andirons turned in a methodical way, before the weary physician sought his couch—to rest? Perhaps, did not a melancholy “halloo” arouse him to the cold fact of another night ride.

Even the river used him ill at times—his beloved South Afton—when she wrapped him in her chilly mists and enveloped him in her fogs; she dealt him treacherously when with her changeful fords she engulfed him in her chill, brown waters and gurgled cruelly about him. But this country doctor had grown inured to hardships, to buffeting wind and weather. He was a happy man, notwithstanding. The little joys of life had kept his nature as sweet as charity.

He loved his home. No ride was so cold or dark that he did not see in perspective a lamplit table crowded with books, a waiting chair, and a welcome as warm as the light that streamed from its windows. A steaming supper, with many a dainty tidbit, rewarded his tardy home-comings.

Man and beast never went hungry at Vine Cottage, it was said. “He’s de bes’ hoss-moster in dis whole kentry,” said an old darky, referring to his fat horses. Not only so, but there was never a motherless chicken, a dethroned king of the barnyard, or a lamed dog, within the precincts of John Trevor’s home but knew him for

their friend. Even the white Maltese cat that yearly reared her young in his corner received his tenderest care. It was no small duty to feed and tend this interesting family each year—to turn the anxious mother in and out; no matter how tired, to house them for the night; but this he did carefully, almost with painful exactness. So when the prudent housewife disposed of Patsy and her kittens, she discovered surprisedly that her husband had sustained a loss which amounted almost to an affliction.

With John Trevor's natural love of humor it is not surprising that he kept in store many a coined and polished phrase for the benefit of the local wits who visited the village store front. Many a challenge he received when he bared his head to the cool shade of the locust trees in front, many a sharp retort did he send to the comfortable group on the store porch—replies so quick and ready that the villagers changed their quids in haste for a fresh onslaught, ere the steady steps of the doctor's horse sounded far up the dusty pike.

But there came a time when this country physician felt a weariness in his limbs, a throbbing in his temples, that he could not account for. A little malaria from the creek bottoms, he argued; a little cold from continuous night riding—surely that was all. He bought warmer flannels for winter, prepared his quinine tonic for summer; but suddenly, despite his will, and very reluctantly at last, this tired physician had his vacation: not on

the breezy mountain heights, or under the quiet stretch of dim pine forests; not beside the cool, green depths of mountain brooks; but tossing on a sick bed in weariness and pain, with restless hands and fevered tongue, he babbled of crystal waters, he spun his reel and swung aloft his speckled trout!

“The doctor is sick,” the neighbors said. The news traveled quickly from plain to hillside, from hamlet to mansion house. Wine, fruits, and flowers crowded the modest home of the sick physician; carriages and buggies rolled up to the little front entrance; horses and braying mules were hitched to outstanding posts. The poor came toiling over the hills to the shadowed home, where they listened through closed doors to the unconscious babbling of their family doctor. Day by day they gathered and turned away without a sight of his familiar face; day by day they crowded the gallery, the adjoining room, the front lawn. When the first uncertain news of a better change reached them, they stood determinedly before his door.

“The doctor—we must see him.”

“He is too sick, too sick,” the watchers said. But when a thin, weak voice bade them enter, they stole in quietly, solemnly; content to grasp his hand, to look in his face, and pass on.

“The doctor is getting well,” they said. Then it was that they vied with one another in kindly ministry, and with strangely tender hands. The doctor’s life was precious in their sight.

John Trevor arose from his sick bed to a newer life; and though he responded to a peremptory call with weak-kneed haste, he felt that there was a bond between him and his people that he could not forget. The old dream of mountain brooks was fast slipping from him. Theories, too, had vanished from his mind. Living facts he dealt with. Even the "steady purpose" which strengthened his youth had long given place to daily deeds and busy action. The souls of the people were dear to him. It was not always of ills of the body that he talked in his office, but of spiritual needs and possibilities. Though the long lanes grew hotter in summer, the hillsides more bleak in winter, and his tired body more susceptible even to the steady jogging of his horse, when urged to remove to Nashville by a brother physician of precious memory, John Trevor was resolute: "I am attached to my people; I cannot leave them."



## CHAPTER XIV.

**A**UNT DICE'S visits to Vine Cottage were frequent in the days of peace following the war. To John Trevor her companionship was as wholesome as in earlier days; always to him a subject of fresh interest and an object of honest affection. In truth, Aunt Dice exerted herself to be agreeable to him, in which she succeeded admirably, being wise enough to know when to be silent and when to be amusing. John Trevor looked forward to the sight of her silvered head over the little front gate, where she awaited his return from a hot, dusty ride. Her unobtrusive ministry—her offering of cool water dripping from the spring, a palm-leaf fan put quietly within his hand, his slippers laid beside him—he noted gratefully. With what a delicate perception she said: “Don’t chillun! don’t tell your pa he’s got a call no sooner’n he comes in; let him res’ fust.” All of which the overworked physician thoroughly appreciated. In her heart she loved Mos John next to her own dear master, while her fondness for the child of her rearing—sweet, patient Anne Trevor—grew stronger and dearer as the years slipped by.

These visits were ever seasons of rejoicing to the children, though Aunt Dice often came on a tour of inspection. It was no common occurrence

to see her pick up a handful of weeds or a bit of paper, on her way from the side gate to the back entrance at Vine Cottage: "It looks on sightly in de yard," her first greeting.

"Gethered any berries, Miss Anne?" she asked once, in blackberry time.

Anne Trevor's negative reply called forth a happy chorus from the little ones: "Let us go with you, Granny!"

"Git your buckets," ordered Granny, shortly, knocking the ashes from her pipe.

The walk to the thicket was pleasant enough, wading through fresh air and sunshine. Moreover, Granny's drolleries were unusually entertaining; but picking berries was quite another thing. Granny turned a stern face to the little flock crowding after her. "I don't want no close neighbors. Folks can't talk an' work too. Git yo' patch, an' *pick*."

That long, hot afternoon was not soon forgotten. Not a word was spoken until the tin pails were filled. The slanting sunbeams fell on tired, flushed faces when the task-mistress called out cheerily: "Come on, chillun; le's go home."

John Trevor renewed his old habit of reading aloud to Aunt Dice, and laughingly declared that she had developed into quite a literary woman. Though oftentimes puzzled—which caused Anne Trevor to smile pityingly at her dark, bewildered face—it interested John Trevor to note that the elegant, flowing style of Irving charmed her; that

Dickens excited her to a quick laugh over his life-like portrayals of men and things familiar to her; that poetry soothed her. But it must be acknowledged that John Trevor liked best to read to her some short, stirring romance, and over the book watch her distressed face when the hero and heroine were toiling through the mazes of the plot, or to listen for her relieved "Thar now!" when all ended well and blissfully. Aunt Dice, too, might have noticed a suspicious shaking of the book and a certain vibration in John Trevor's voice which hinted of his fun-loving propensities. But her comments were worth remembering. Of fiction she understood nothing; they were real living beings in those books, men and women who sinned and suffered or lived nobly. "He mus' a been a likely man," she would say, respectfully, of some character who had patiently suffered and borne his burden. A life of self-sacrifice, a deed of charity, a duty faithfully done, caught her quick sympathy.

"What is your opinion, Aunt Dice?" asked John Trevor, as he finished a well-known book from a well-known author.

"Too much whisky, Mos John," she said decisively. "It's a drink here, and a drink thar. More'n I ever heerd tell of in ole moster's days, 'pears to me. Wine an' brandy'll git the best o' men, if they tech it too often." The cleaner pages of the present day would have pleased her. The punch bowl, the mugs of ale and beer, so pleas-

ingly described, were odious things to her. "Whisky ruins a man," she said. Even in the days of free distilleries, Aunt Dice tasted alcohol, as a medicine, sparingly; but as a beverage, never.

Notwithstanding her objections, Aunt Dice's respect for books was great. She looked upon the knowledge contained in them almost with awe—a wonderland to her that she never hoped to explore—but she was decided in her opinion that they were "not fur niggers." "Book larnin' spiles a nigger," she argued. She might have thought differently had she lived to this day, but she scored a triumph once. Uncle Billy Barnes, a neighboring "cullud gen'l'mun" of some property, was quite a leader among his own, and talked education in every lane and byway, when not engrossed in earning a penny or turning over a dime. On an occasion, when Aunt Dice was enjoying one of her visits, Uncle Billy appeared at Vine Cottage, his favorite market place—for, as he said, "the doctor gives livin' prices"—trundling a wheelbarrowful of turnips. Aunt Dice received him with some deference, smoothing out her apron in a dignified way. Standing by the fire, turning his huge feet to its warmth, Uncle Billy discoursed upon his favorite theme in broad, Tennessee-negro dialect: "Now, who'd a thought thar wus so much in books? My gals kin stump me enny nite outen dem books. My darter, Sally—you knows her—axes me t'other nite, 'Pa, what make it col' in winter, an' hot in summer?' Now, you knows

I ain't no fool, but dat wus de fus' time I uver thought of sich a thing. I answers, 'I dunno; what you know 'bout it?' So she sez, 'De teacher tol' me—'cause de sun is funder off in winter, an' closter in summer.' Well, dat soun' reas'n'ble to me, but I never would a knowed it ef it hadn't ben fur books." Uncle Billy pocketed his fifty cents, took up his worn hat, and departed.

"Mos John, is that so?" asked Aunt Dice suddenly.

John Trevor smiled: "Hardly, Aunt Dice."

"Thar! I tol' you a nigger couldn't larn."

Nevertheless, Uncle Billy's daughter Sally earns a handsome living now teaching school, for she learned more thoroughly at Fisk University.

Among the Trevor children Aunt Dice particularly "favored" the eldest—a growing, winsome lassie, with riotous, dark curls, delicate scarlet lips, and clear gray eyes much like John Trevor's own, and much like him in a sunny, hopeful disposition, a love for all human kind which characterized her, and a tender regard for all dumb brutes. "You are like your father, chile—jes' as faithful," Aunt Dice would say, when some unselfish action brought to mind the much beloved physician.

Like her father, Evelyn was fond of Aunt Dice, and spent with her many a well-remembered, happy hour. That Evelyn was a studious schoolgirl, Aunt Dice was pleased to notice; and many an extra task she served rather than disturb those hours

of study. "Let the chile alone," she would say, when Evelyn was called upon for some household duty. "Let her alone; she's got a book." When Evelyn had arrived at the age of hero worship, she tried with painful earnestness to persuade her dusky colaborer to comprehend with her the virtues of her heroes. In this she was not so successful. Aunt Dice did not call those valorous heroes great. She had her own ideas of true valor and worth. Evelyn's histories puzzled her. She could not understand the ceaseless battling for power and earthly renown—the thirst for conquest, the crime and intrigue that stained the centuries in blood. War, to her, was a horrible butchery. She recognized no law of life but the mighty one of peace and good will—the law of forgiveness and loving-kindness. "Heavenly wisdom, chile, is better'n all that," she said. "Sol'mon tol' 'bout it often 'nough in the Bible, but 'pears like the world ain't learnt it yit."

Still Aunt Dice was interested; anything within the lids of a book interested her, however much or little she understood, or affected to ignore. "Git your book, Ev'lyn, an' read," she said frequently.

On an occasion during an hour with her pipe, Aunt Dice's most contemplative mood, Evelyn with a *Life of Napoleon* in her lap, read to her eagerly, excitedly, portions of the life of the Corsican boy, the soldier, the general, the first consul, the emperor and conqueror, and the great

prisoner at St. Helena. Aunt Dice smoked her pipe in stolid indifference.

“Now let me show you, Granny,” said Evelyn, reaching for her geography and pointing to pink and yellow patches on the map. “See how many countries—kingdoms—he conquered.”

“What’d he want wid so many?” asked Granny, shortly.

“Why,” said Evelyn, hesitatingly, “I suppose he wished to make a greater conquest than Charlemagne or Cæsar or Alexander, or any of those great men I read you about.”

“He’d a better let well ’nough alone, then he might not er ended in jail.”

Evelyn insisted: “But say he was great, Granny. Do you not think he was a great man?”

Aunt Dice would make no such concession. She turned to her pipe with the crushing answer: “What fur?”

John Trevor, an amused listener, took up from the table a small Bible. “Stop, Evelyn. You do not understand Aunt Dice. This is her Book of books, and this is her Hero of heroes,” he said, turning to the twenty-fourth Psalm, and reading in clear tones: “‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.’”

Aunt Dice sat erect, her smoking pipe forgotten in her hand. There was a flash in her old eyes, a

quiver about her lips as if they struggled for utterance. But the power of language she could not grasp. A silver tongue was not hers. Perhaps ere this the crippled speech of the grand old slave has found a voice for eloquent praise before her King of glory.

John Trevor was not mistaken. The world's Redeemer was her Hero, her King of glory. All others beside him were poor and blind and wretched. All the worship, the adulation within her heart she laid at his feet. Perhaps the love of the wonderful, so inherent in her race, found vent in the enthusiasm of her imagination, which vested in this one grand character all the attributes that power and beauty could suggest. To him nothing was impossible. He was the Mighty One of all the ages, everlasting, omnipotent, supreme. Lord of earth and sky, Conqueror of death and life, he rode the storm, he soared upon the wings of the wind, he healed the sick, he raised the dead. In him was centered all that loveliness could but dream. He published the doctrine of peace and forgiveness. He loved the poor, the blind, the weak. He was a refuge for the weary, the heavy-laden. He gave his life a ransom for the world. He died for her—for her. He was "altogether lovely," this Lily of the valley, this bright and morning Star, the "chiefest among ten thousand," this beautiful One; he was her Hero. The Bible truly was her Book of books. Of her Christian character, her great and



simple faith was the prominent trait. She, who scorned an exaggeration, accepted the Bible literally. She rejected none of its mysterious figures, whose sublime conceptions she little understood. "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs," she commented upon with a childlike faith, beautiful to behold: "If the Bible say so, it *mus'* be so."

## CHAPTER XV.

**E**VELYN TREVOR, always a favorite with Aunt Dice, spent many a pleasant hour at Riverside. It was often her privilege to visit the old homestead, and it was ever a time of joyous expectancy, when the blue hills of South Afton came into view, and the venerable old beech by the ford trailed its branches in the river with a gurgling welcome. Then the venturesome plunge into the clear freestone waters, the grating of wheels on the graveled drive, the rush and baying of the hounds at the great double gate, and the welcome figure of Aunt Dice coming across the lawn, her hands folded behind her, her bare head silvery in the sunlight, all were happy experiences not to be forgotten.

The charming mistress, the master, whose smile always gladdened the hearts of John Trevor's children, received her with affectionate regard. The old home, with the familiar surroundings of Anne Macy's childhood, had for Evelyn a peculiar interest. The bright, changeful river always charmed her. The slow-waving cedars of the cemetery impressed her solemnly. The house held its attractions: the cunning little rooms back of the galleries, painted in pure white; the pale-yellow walls of the dining room, hung still with the

portraits of Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor; the ample fireplace and brass-knobbed andirons; the antique sideboard, which now did duty of a more substantial kind.

Evelyn spent hours by the quaint old bookcase, which contained volumes of history, heavy works of astronomy and chemistry, Latin grammars and books of mathematics, religious works, prayer books, poetry, and curious fiction. Evelyn handled them tenderly, reading on the fly leaves faintly legible but familiar family names. The old-fashioned paper on the parlor walls, an indistinct pattern of grayish, wavy lines and trailing roses; the great four-posted bedstead which stood in state in the best bedchamber, with its imposing canopy, a marvel of mahogany, silk, and lace, Evelyn felt could belong to no other so charmingly as to the pleasant old mansion at Riverside.

The dark "scuttle hole," too, had a curious interest to her: within its gloomy recesses Aunt Dice had hidden the bedding and family valuables during the war. Now the old clock, which had been removed from the dining room, stood here, staring still, with a white, dismayed face, as when its tones had been rudely hushed under hostile hands.

War-time memories were growing indistinct to Evelyn; already the days of slavery seemed far away and dim. Her remembrances were those of a little child, but its saddest chapters she now recalled as an unpleasant dream; not only the day

when her mother, brave Anne Trevor, coolly gathered her eggs under guard and pointed bayonet of a blue-coated negro soldier; the dark days when her father lay in Franklin jail, a prisoner of war; the sad farewells when all the slaves, weeping and wailing, departed forever; but the dull suspense of the gloomy time, the days of want and privation—the musty meal and sugarless parched rye coffee.

Other things Evelyn remembered not so unpleasantly. There were merry gatherings around the table, and merry comments on the uncertain flavor of uncertain dishes—the results of her mother's ludicrous attempts at cooking. There were exciting incidents of Yankee raids and rebel feasts at Vine Cottage. On one occasion she stood on the lawn with her mother and Julia, the nurse, watching with interest a squad of flying rebel horsemen and a dozen or more Yankees in full pursuit.

Anne Trevor's blue eyes flashed. Verily she had about her just then a look of Mos Sam himself.

“Open the gate, Julia; let them come in.”

Julia flew to open the gate. The rebels passed through with a yell of triumph.

“Leave the gate open!” shouted the leading Yankee.

“Shut it, Julia!”

“Leave it open!” he commanded, with raised pistol.

“*Shut it, Julia!*” cried brave Anne Trevor.

Julia shut the gate quickly, amid the threatening oaths of the baffled leader, and thereby considered herself a martyr to principle, and heroine of the war.

But Evelyn could never forget when she, a little child, sat upon the knee of a Federal officer, and wondered that one in the objectionable blue uniform could look so kindly upon her, and stroke her hair with such tender hands, as he said, sadly: “You are very like my own little daughter.” Evelyn still hoped that he lived to see his “own little daughter” again; and she regretted sorrowfully that wiser heads than hers had not settled the questions of the war peaceably, so that all this bloodshed might have been avoided.

Her mother’s former slaves—Eliza, Julia, and Pet—now occupied part of the old quarters at Riverside. Eliza was much the same, quiet and earnest, almost as faithful as Aunt Dice; Julia was still strong and comely, full of fun and spirits; but Pet—still a very spoiled pet—was a “fine lady,” a development of her short stay in Nashville and her late freedom. Her husband, a valuable farm hand, worked early and late to provide her with all possible comforts and to keep her in idleness.

Evelyn went out to the quarters one sunny morning to find Pet reclining her ample figure in a chair by the cabin hearth, and sipping her nine o’clock coffee.

"Why, Pet, we have breakfasted hours ago," said Evelyn, amused at the "fashionably late" breakfast.

"Yo' see, Miss Evelyn," Pet said, complacently, "Joe don't want me to git up early. I has a smoth'rin' in my breas' uver mornin', an' I don't have to wuk hard nohow. Joe takes his meals at de hous', an' I gits de chillun a little some'n to eat, no sooner'n I'm rested, an' has my coffee ready. I ain't 'bleeged to wuk, yo' know. Joe gits fifteen dollars a mont'."

"I am glad you are doing well, Pet," said Evelyn, kindly. From her earliest remembrance she had ever had an unreasonable fondness for saucy, good-natured Pet.

"Yessum, Miss Ev'lyn, Joe g'wine to be rich fo' long, an' he say I shan't wuk no mo' 'tall. Dat ain't all nuther. He g'wine to buy me a sewin' m'chine, an' a red silk dress, an' shoes wid gol' heels to 'um."

Evelyn's clear eyes wandered from the unkempt bed to the ash-strewn hearth, where two small boys sopped their bread and molasses from tin plates, their bacon and gravy from an iron skillet, back to the worn cotton gown which Pet spread grandly about her.

"You will be a fine lady, Pet," smiled Evelyn.

"Oh, yessum; Joe say I got ter be. He'll buy me a car'idge some day, an' de red silk dress, an' de gol'-heel shoes—"

"Bronze-heeled shoes, do you mean?" asked

Evelyn, puzzled. She remembered a childish admiration of hers for her mother's negro women, when dressed in their smart Sunday gowns—silks, muslins, merinos—gowns of a season's wearing, bestowed indulgently upon them. She glanced again at Pet's soiled cotton gown.

"How can you have those things at Riverside, Pet?"

"Lor' bless you, Miss Ev'lyn!" exclaimed loquacious Pet, "*we* ain't g'wine ter stay here. We's g'wine ter Nashvul. Country don't 'gree wid me. 'Sides, money can't keep me here," she continued, whimperingly; "dis place is sho'ly ha'nted. *Somebody* g'wine to die here soon. De screech owels is hollerin' in de grabeyard, an' dat mak' me knows it. Dey screeches an' screeches up dar; den dey lights on de hous', an' somebody got ter go."

Evelyn listened dreamily. Riverside was haunted, the negroes said. Strange sounds were heard on the stairways of the "white folks' house"; familiar faces looked forth from its windows. The tall clock tolled from the garret, and ghostly figures trod the long galleries. At night the scraping of fiddles, the ringing of clevis pins, accompanied by the measured beat of heavy feet, sounded from the old quarters' kitchen. Uncle Amos sang from his cabin, while the little negro boy who was drowned in the river sported with his dog on its waters. Riverside was haunted; the negroes were "boun' ter go."

"Don't lis'n to her, Ev'lyn. Pet talks like a fool," said Aunt Dice suddenly from the doorway.

Evelyn followed Aunt Dice to the old loom house, where she tended a brood of chickens, and looked curiously over the relics of slavery days: a spinning machine, turned with a crank and rollers; spinning wheels, reels, and cards; a cunning little flax wheel, and the ponderous loom which stood with silent shuttles in a corner. Aunt Dice answered Evelyn's questions patiently.

As said before, Aunt Dice was a woman of few words. Her sentences were short and decisive. An intelligent question she answered plainly, concisely; a bright remark she received with a pleased "Thar now," which kept one on the hunt for brighter ones; but one of her keen, searching looks was the only answer vouchsafed a silly question.

"What is this, Granny?" asked Evelyn, lifting a corner of a large fishing net, spread over the loom to dry.

"A seine, chile; a seine."

Evelyn, reared in her dry little village, knew nothing of fishing tackle or the technicalities of the art.

"Why, how can one man manage all this?"

"One man don't manage it. Some gits on one side o' the river, some on t'other—"

"But, Granny, I don't understand."

Granny glanced at Evelyn sharply, and started



in a steady trot for her cabin. Evelyn followed. Though conscious of a greatly deplored ignorance, she determined to try Aunt Dice's patience to the uttermost: "Granny, do explain," she ventured boldly.

Granny turned suddenly: "I putty—near—despise ye!"

Then they stood together in the pleasant morning sunlight, looking into each other's eyes, and laughing in perfect good humor.

## CHAPTER XVI.

**A**UNT DICE was growing old. This she did not show in looks. Her eyes still held their fire, and her face had few wrinkles. There was no querulousness in tone or manner, no childishness in speech or action. The broad sweep of her brow was still smooth and placid, for she was never wont to corrugate her forehead in useless frowns. Her carefully brushed hair still had its silvery sheen, but her strength was perceptibly fading. Her low figure seemed a little more squat and short. Her rough hands trembled; her massive chin quivered and appeared to hang slightly, which gave the effect of a double chin; "a sign of age," Aunt Dice said. She had little to do; came and went as she pleased, and spent much of her time visiting the sick and poor, with whom her name was a household word. At Riverside she was content. Her social visits were noticeably shorter, as if she would fain have hurried back to the cool quiet of her beloved home. "'Pears like I can't stay nowhar," she would apologize. "I'm gittin' a fool 'bout home." The children of her dear master she caressed and dandled upon her knees, or treated them occasionally to the wholesome discipline of their father before them, though with greater leniency, natural to her age. The eldest she would admon-

ish frequently: "You've got Mos William's name, son; min' how you han'le it."

John Trevor, the second, whose clear-cut face had the same proud, sweet look of his mother, Aunt Dice had sometimes to uphold when the imperious William proved too domineering. But the youngest, a tender, delicate girl, white and pure as a star-eyed daisy, Aunt Dice held upon her bosom with an anxious care, as if she feared that the angels had loved this one too well.

The days passed by, days that were blessed. Aunt Dice was reaping the fruits of her well-spent years. Among all her acquaintances she bore an honored name, and by her white friends was treated with distinguished courtesy. Wherever known she was never forgotten. Strangers remembered her. A missionary in far-off Brazil, who had spent a short week at Vine Cottage, wrote to John Trevor: "Remember me to Aunt Dice; I do not forget her." It is needless to add that among all her "children" and "grandchildren" she was very highly honored and beloved.

In all her long life Aunt Dice had but one glimpse of the world and its way—an unfavorable one truly, within the walls of Nashville's courthouse. Summoned as a witness in a trial for murder—a strange, new duty for her seventy-four years—she prepared to answer the call, after many instructions from the master. She donned her best bonnet and gown.

"Don't get confused, Aunt Dice," cautioned the mistress.

"I ain't never done nothin' to be 'shamed of that I knows on," she replied bravely.

Though it required some courage to meet this demand, Aunt Dice proved equal to the occasion. It was learned that she caused many a smile in the court room by her droll expressions, her caustic wit, and commanded the gentle respect of the judge himself when she bared her white head to the defendant's lawyer: "Do ye see my gray head? Do you think I'd tell a *lie*?" After this there was no more "cross-questioning."

When her duty was done the judge spoke to her: "Aunt Dice, with whom do you stay?"

"I b'longs to Cap'n Macy, suh—Mos Sam," she answered quickly.

"*Mos Sam*?" he questioned, smiling. "Would you feel free enough to come to Nashville, if I offered you good wages and a comfortable home?"

"Thanky, suh," she rejoined proudly. "I don't 'ceive wages, an' I wouldn't leave Mos Sam for all the comf'ble homes in Tennessee."

As might be expected, Aunt Dice came home from Nashville brimful of news. Her trip to the courthouse was an amusing theme for many a day after. She interested her friends by her original sketches of strange sights and the grotesque mimicry of the characters she met, in which the defendant's lawyer was least flattered. Of the judge she spoke respectfully, a sign of her high regard. "He wus a well-mannered man, a p'lte gen'l'mun," she said. "I made him my bes' curt'sy."

Her "curt'sy" was a low bow, which brings a smile to remember. The downward sweep of the body, the outspread palms, the backward step, were ungracefully executed; but the effect of her earnestness and pride was stimulating, if nothing more.

In summing up the qualities of Aunt Dice, the superiority of her character above the average negro is apparent. She was an exception, in many respects, even from the talkative, superstitious, but time-honored "black mammy," who has earned her place in the hearts of the southern people. Aunt Dice had few equals among her kind. Her faults she had, doubtless, but they do not live to reproach her memory. With her progressive mind, her broad intellect, her intelligence and wonderful accuracy of judgment, it is impossible to say what she might have been had she lived at the present time. The progress of the world in peace and good will, in Christian philanthropy and excellence, would have pleased her much, though it is interesting to imagine what her opinion would have been of the bloomer-costumed, strong-minded woman. She would perhaps have turned rather to the straight-hanging skirts and soft muslin kerchief of the old-time woman, who did not ape the manners and dress of the stronger sex. Aunt Dice would have been pleased to see also, in many instances, the upbuilding and outgrowing of mind, capability, and worth in her own race and people. But she served well her day and genera-

tion. Many under more promising circumstances have done less.

Much more could be told of her deeds and sayings during her seventy-five years of toil and earnest endeavor. Perhaps the numerous "grandchildren," every one of whom looked first into her dusky face, could each tell a story of her love and faithfulness.

It had been a special wish of Aunt Dice's to see born to John Trevor a son; but it was only after long years of waiting that her wish was gratified. Daughter after daughter had she taken from the mother's side and laid in his arms—all of whom he gathered tenderly to his heart; but when, in her seventieth year, she placed in his lap a real kicking boy, with a pleased "Thar now, Mos John," the father's smile was not prouder than her own. "John Willlian" she named him—a homely name enough, but one that meant much to her.

It was four years later, during one of her last social visits to Vine Cottage—a visit grown sacred now with the memory of it—she sat with this rosy-cheeked boy in her lap. A pretty picture it was: the boy of four years playing with his white terrier, Roy, at his feet; the gray-haired nurse, with one toil-worn hand on his knee—pleasant, dignified, not one whit childish or peevish in her old age.

"John," asked his father suddenly, with a twinkle in his eye—"mind you think well, my son—which one do you love best, Aunt Dice or Roy?"

John lifted a pair of earnest eyes to Aunt Dice's

homely face, looked down at the dog who wagged his tail knowingly, and answered, "Roy."

"That's right, chile; tell the truth," said Aunt Dice, in no wise ruffled.

But the visits of this faithful nurse, the sight of her well-known figure, her dear companionship, were soon to be no more at Vine Cottage. The days crept by—days that were golden. The seasons waned slowly, as if loath to leave the quiet landscapes. The sun rose and set, kissing the river in a myriad dimples, slanting in long golden bars through the maples, silvering the whitened harvest fields at Riverside and gilding the hazy November woods. The eight long, bright years closed in darkness, nevermore to be lifted.

The mistress, lovely in her life, lay down in death after a short week's illness, and Riverside was desolate! Nay, more; all South Afton mourned for one who had lived among them so graciously, whose memory yet lingers amid the sunlit hills and quiet vales as the perfume of a flower crushed in its bloom. Aunt Dice went about with a still face, trying to be as brave in her old age as in the days of her strength.

When the family friends arrived from Nashville they found the house in quiet keeping, as in the presence of death. The severe plainness of the table where coffee and bread were served, the noiseless tread of servants, the solemn stillness, betokened the faithful management of Aunt Dice, who knew what was befitting and seemly.

After the lovely mistress was laid away among the myrtles of the cemetery, Aunt Dice's health visibly declined. For a year she bore up bravely against a malignant disease, striving to be house-keeper and mother to the children, striving with all her might to bring back the force of her younger days, the steady step of her prime. Not a sorrowful fight this seemed, but a cheerful struggle, even with occasional glimpses of her old, grotesque humor, which was the chief charm of her youth. Above all, there was a sublime faith in an all-wise Creator, who was able both to make and unmake, to give and to take.

On her last solemn visit to Anne Trevor, with the shadow of death upon her, it was her daily habit to take up the family Bible, lay it reverently in the lap of some one to read aloud, while she listened gravely, a peaceful look in her dear old eyes, so soon to see in his beauty the One she had followed so humbly.

It was John Trevor's duty to tell her of her incurable illness. She received the news quietly, saying with cheerful emphasis: "Well, I can't 'spect to live allus. Death is a sho' thing." She sat in silence for awhile; then, as if the dawning of a new day had broken in upon her soul, she said slowly: "I'll soon see—Mos William."



## CHAPTER XVII.

**W**ITH all her indomitable will, and the sad fact that Mos Sam needed her sorely, the end of the year found Aunt Dice bedridden; but withal the year's end found her determined. She was to spend her last days with Charley—"Mos Sam had trubble ernuff."

This was perhaps the second and last mistake of her life; but what fortitude and self-sacrifice this decision called for, none can judge. In spite of her long years of active service, Aunt Dice could not reconcile herself to be ministered unto by her white people. The sight of her master standing over her at night troubled her.

"What can I do for you, Aunt Dice?" he would ask, when the thought of her kept him awake.

"A little water, Mos Sam; then go to bed."

That long, cold winter was a sad experience. The stricken master, with the care of his motherless ones, often sought her cabin at midnight hours to find her deserted by her hired nurse, keeping her uncomplaining watch alone. He built her fires, administered her medicine, brought her cool water from the great bluff spring—no longer the willful, imperious master, but the strangely gentle, patient nurse.

Evelyn Trevor, who rode over often during the Christmas holidays, looked in one day upon a touching scene. The old servant lay tossing on a bed of pain, talking wildly, deliriously, the result of a neuralgic affection of the brain—a reflex action of the deadly tumor. “The cotton fiel’s white; stir ’em up, Cæsar; don’ let Mos William fin’ ’em ’sleep. Be lively, boys; daylight’s burn-in’!” cried the sufferer, in the old imperious tone, followed by a moaning, “Mos Sam, you’re ruined, you’re ruined!” or quieting suddenly, “Hush! Miss Helen’s singin’.”

The master leaned over the hearth, warming a bran poultice. Evelyn’s heart ached as she watched his bowed figure, the big salt tears that rolled from his careworn face dropping silently on the unconscious brow of the sufferer.

Under Dr. Trevor’s prompt treatment Aunt Dice was relieved, her reason restored, and she gained strength so rapidly that she bade Evelyn a cheerful good-by from the cabin door when the holidays were ended.

The long winter passed. Aunt Dice made arrangements for her final departure. All the loving service and tender care of a grateful family were offered her; still Aunt Dice was resolute. Not even the protestations and entreaties of her beloved master availed. To Charley she would go, leaving one request—to be buried near Cæsar, at Riverside; a sunny slope of the cemetery overlooking the river, which her kind old master

himself had chosen as her last resting place, where the golden candlesticks she had planted bloomed and burned in the early spring. One should prefer to order the ending of this story as in fiction, to frame the picture fittingly. But Charley came for his mother one bleak day in March—quarrelsome, dictatorial Charley, who was more careful, it was said, of her numerous bedquilts and the wonderful bureau with glass handles than of her precious sick body.

“Good-by, Mos Sam; take keer yo’s’e’f”; and a black, trembling hand reached forth from the covered “express.”

The last link was gone that bound the stricken master to Riverside. Her empty cabin stood desolate. No homely advice, no cheering word or caustic rebuke, no sound of her steady step! Her work was done. The master was alone—the happy home no more. The lonely call of the river tortured him. Never again would the flash and smile of her dimpling waters soothe or charm him! Never for him the full, free breath of the rolling uplands, the billowy sweep of gold! With the light of his home and the hopes of his youth, the glorious beauty of Riverside had departed, to return nevermore. The tender green of spring, the wanton beauty of the summer, though the mocking bird in the maple poured out his heart in melody for the love of it, were never for him again. Riverside was but the grave of his buried hopes. Restless and unhappy, he sold his inherit-

ance and wandered abroad, with the moaning cry of the river still lingering in his ears.

In Nashville the whereabouts of Aunt Dice soon ceased to be known. The negro habit of flitting hither and thither in the hurrying quest for bread and shelter soon left her friends no trace of her. Rumors drifted occasionally in an uncertain way from the noise of the city: Aunt Dice was better, was walking about, was in bed again; but only once a message, more like a despairing cry: "Tell Mos Sam I'd die happy fur one mo' sight of his face." Perhaps it was well that she did not know that her master was away and her beloved Riverside in the hands of strangers. In her self-banishment, one could but imagine the change for the proud old negress. For years accustomed to cleanly and wholesome surroundings, she was yet in her old age to realize the filth and squalor, the uncertain maintenance of real negro life. Then the busy, bustling city; the ceaseless passing back and forth, the strange sounds breaking in upon the weary exile, whose ears had been for forty years tuned to the soft lapping of her loved South Afton!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**E**VELYN TREVOR sat within her pleasant room at a boarding house in Nashville, holding in her hands a letter with a well-known signature, a sweet conceit: "Your dear father, John Trevor."

Through the open window the February winds, drifting from the sunny uplands of Riverside, from the hillside playground of Vine Cottage farm, lifted the curls from her brow and stirred the ruffling of her dainty gown, whispering of the spring's glad coming. Her books lay unopened at her side. Nine o'clock would find her on her way to Nashville's Seminary for Young Ladies; still she sat looking far away over the western hills, thinking—thinking over the letter she held in her hands. The classic shades of Locust Grove Academy, the school of her earlier days, were to her now only dear memories. The free or public schools had crowded out this modest hall of learning, where the schoolmistress and principal moved with queenly grace among her satellites—assistant and music teachers.

Evelyn could not remember whenever this wise, firm mistress had failed in look or word to encourage her inquiring mind, or to smooth a difficult step. She could not remember during those four

long terms a neglectful breach of courtesy from preceptress, or a failure to reward the smallest favor by a bow and smile or gentle thanks. Yet what a steely grip in those delicate hands! A look was a command; a slight tremor of her chin, an ominous warning; but her smile, lighting up the compass of her strong, intellectual face, was worth many an hour of laborious effort. Evelyn felt sometimes that she could have reached any height whither this smile might have led.

Not without danger of "cramming," she peeped into science, pored over history; she read, composed, and copied; she transposed and analyzed sentences, reaching to Milton's intricate verse; but, sad to say, she stumbled continuously over the dull problems of her arithmetic. Nevertheless, duty was pleasant here. There were "sermons in stones"; flowers were ruthlessly pulled apart and dissected; the use of globes made her geography an easy study; and she learned that the stars were not mere golden things, studding the sky for glory and beauty.

To please her fancy more, the surrounding groves and lanes of the academy were peopled with airy forms from her own mythology. Flora smiled from the garden; Pomona showed her rosy face from the depths of the orchard; dolphins sported in the miniature lake; while farther down a charming bit of landscape, where the streamlet gurgled over rocks and eddied into pools, there was—ah yes!—Scylla and Charybdis. Over the

brow of the hill the great god Pan himself, not dead—oh no!—played his pipe where the wild grapes grew.

But this February morning Evelyn was not dreaming of the well-remembered haunts of Locust Grove Academy, nor was she longing for the dewy dells of her country home; but her thoughts were far beyond the western horizon, where the rippling waters of dear South Afton caressed the rugged bluffs at Riverside. In a cabin door she saw a short, squat figure; a homely face, with kind old eyes that looked a sad good-by at parting.

“Now, ’member, chile,” Aunt Dice had said, “tain’t all to larn in schoolin’ an’ books. Ef yo’ is a lady, yo’ll *go* with ladies, *an’* gen’l’muns.”

These words were useful to Evelyn. She had not forgotten. She read her father’s letter, her eyes growing dim over the words, “Look for Aunt Dice, and bring her home; we think she is in distress.”

All day at school the babbling of sweet South Afton sounded in Evelyn’s ears; all day a dark, homely face smiled from the pages of her book. At her earliest hour she started on her quest, only to return at nightfall weary and disappointed.

Of Aunt Dice’s granddaughters, all of whom had some years before removed to Nashville, Eliza was the only one living. Pet—poor spoiled Pet—had indulged her love of finery to her heart’s content at the “second-hand” stores, but died all too soon for the “car’idge an’ hosses,” and the

“shoes wid gol’ heels.” Evelyn had seen Julia once only. When passing down the street with a friend she heard a frantic voice calling behind her, “Miss Ev’lyn, O Miss Ev’lyn!” Evelyn turned in surprise to see Julia—no longer the comely Julia—kneeling at her feet, gathering up the skirt of her gown and kissing it passionately. Julia, too, was soon laid away in the colored burying ground at Mt. Ararat. Eliza was still in Nashville; but where, Evelyn could not tell, owing to the varying life of the colored poor.

Next day after school hours Evelyn resumed her search from street to street, tracing painfully the whereabouts of the changeful, flitting Charley. He had gone “further up town”—on “t’other side o’ the riber”; and lastly, “He ain’t here; he’s moved som’r’s ’long o’ Front street.”

On the third day’s search Evelyn passed down an ill-smelling alley, and knocked at the grimy door of a basement room. Entering, she noticed a group of noisy, dirty children; recognized slowly the wrinkled remnant of Charley’s wife, Maria; then her quick eyes saw in the opposite corner a narrow iron bedstead, which she knew to be Aunt Dice’s—on which the honored servant of Riverside had been wont to take her afternoon naps. Passing quickly to the dark corner, she knelt by the bedside, where lay a shrunken figure, who passed one withered arm around Evelyn’s neck, while the bed shook with her silent grief.

“Dear Granny!” Words were weak. Evelyn



could only hold the rough, fevered hand, or pass her cool fingers over the throbbing temples.

Aunt Dice grew quiet at length: "How's Mos Sam?"

"He was well when we heard from him last—"

"Mos John an' Miss Anne?"

"All well, dear Granny; we only want you."

Aunt Dice lay silent for awhile. Evelyn stroked her hand, which twitched nervously.

"Ev'lyn, tell Mos Sam—not to sen' me—any mo' money."

Evelyn hesitated. She understood the old reserve. Aunt Dice's private griefs had always been respected, but surely in her helpless old age she might share her griefs for once. "Tell me why, Granny. Tell me why."

"I never see—de money."

"Granny, never mind the money. I have come for you. You shall go home with me at the close of the week. That is day after to-morrow. They are waiting for you at home. You will come?" pleaded Evelyn.

Aunt Dice lifted her face with a new interest. She raised herself on her elbow. "It mus' be lookin' fresh an' cool at Mos John's. Yes, I'll go—ef I kin." She looked toward the dark doorway. "Ain't the grass comin' out?"

"Yes, Granny; spring is waiting for you at home, at dear Vine Cottage."

"Yes, chile." Eternal spring was waiting for her. Evelyn sank, sobbing, by her bed. Aunt

Dice put out her thin, wrinkled hand. "Don't, Ev'lyn, don't take on so. Yo' Granny is nuther afeard ter die nur ter live. I'm mo' comf'ble than ye knows of," she continued. "Riah does de bes' she knows how, an' Liza brings me things ter eat, an' keeps my bed clean."

"But you will go with me, Granny?" asked Evelyn, opening her basket and piling her fruit, rolls, and coffee about the bed.

Aunt Dice turned restlessly, and passed one hand wearily over her face. "Mebbe so, Ev'lyn—ef nuthin' don't happen."

"What can happen?" asked Evelyn, cheerfully. "You' will get well at Vine Cottage, with dear mother and the girls to nurse you." After a fond good-by, she closed the door and hastened homeward.

Next day at school it was not the babbling of the river in her ears; not the vision of a stout, low figure in a cabin door; but a dark, shrunken form in a dark corner beckoned to her sadly.

On the following Saturday Evelyn stood again at the basement door, staring blankly at the deserted room. Charley had flown again, no one knew whither. Evelyn turned away in sore disappointment. What was the meaning of Aunt Dice's reticence about the "money," her hesitating acceptance of a home at Vine Cottage? Could it be—oh no, surely it could not be—that Charley used her monthly pittance, and smuggled her sick body back and forth across the city,

that no communication pass between her and her friends!

Another search was instituted. There was a season of suspense, an unavoidable delay of several weeks, when John Trevor found Eliza, and learned that Aunt Dice had passed away at Eliza's home, and not with Charley, for whom she had borne so much.

Just here, while the pen may be ready to censure, the heart prompts a feeling of leniency for the wayward, mistaken Charley. That he was Aunt Dice's son precludes a hasty judgment. Were she here to plead for him, she would perhaps find some trait of character worthy of her son; some charm of manner or person, some redeeming quality that others know not of. That he loved her, she did not doubt. He was her own, her son. Let Charley's failings be forgotten, now that he sleeps quietly at last by his mother's side, after the "fitful fever" of his erring but unfortunate life.

Aunt Dice was tended with care and devotion by faithful Eliza, who secured the privilege by renouncing all claim to her grandmother's possessions. Aunt Dice died in peace. She was laid away in her plain coffin, robed in her black silk gown, with the lace shawl pinned about her; and in the early spring, when the golden candlesticks were aflame around Cæsar's grave, when the laughing waters of her native river danced and rippled in the spring sunshine, Aunt Dice, the

faithful slave, the beloved servant, was lowered into her grave on a bleak slope of Mt. Ararat, within sound of the city's roar and tumult.

It was also learned that Aunt Dice was very patient through all the dreary days of her illness, very quiet and "peaceful-like," waiting in simple faith the time of her departure; for the reunion with those who had gone before, whom she had loved and served so faithfully. But a fairer One she saw, perhaps, than any of earth she had known, when in her dying moments she lifted a radiant face and said, "Glory—glo-r-y!"







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